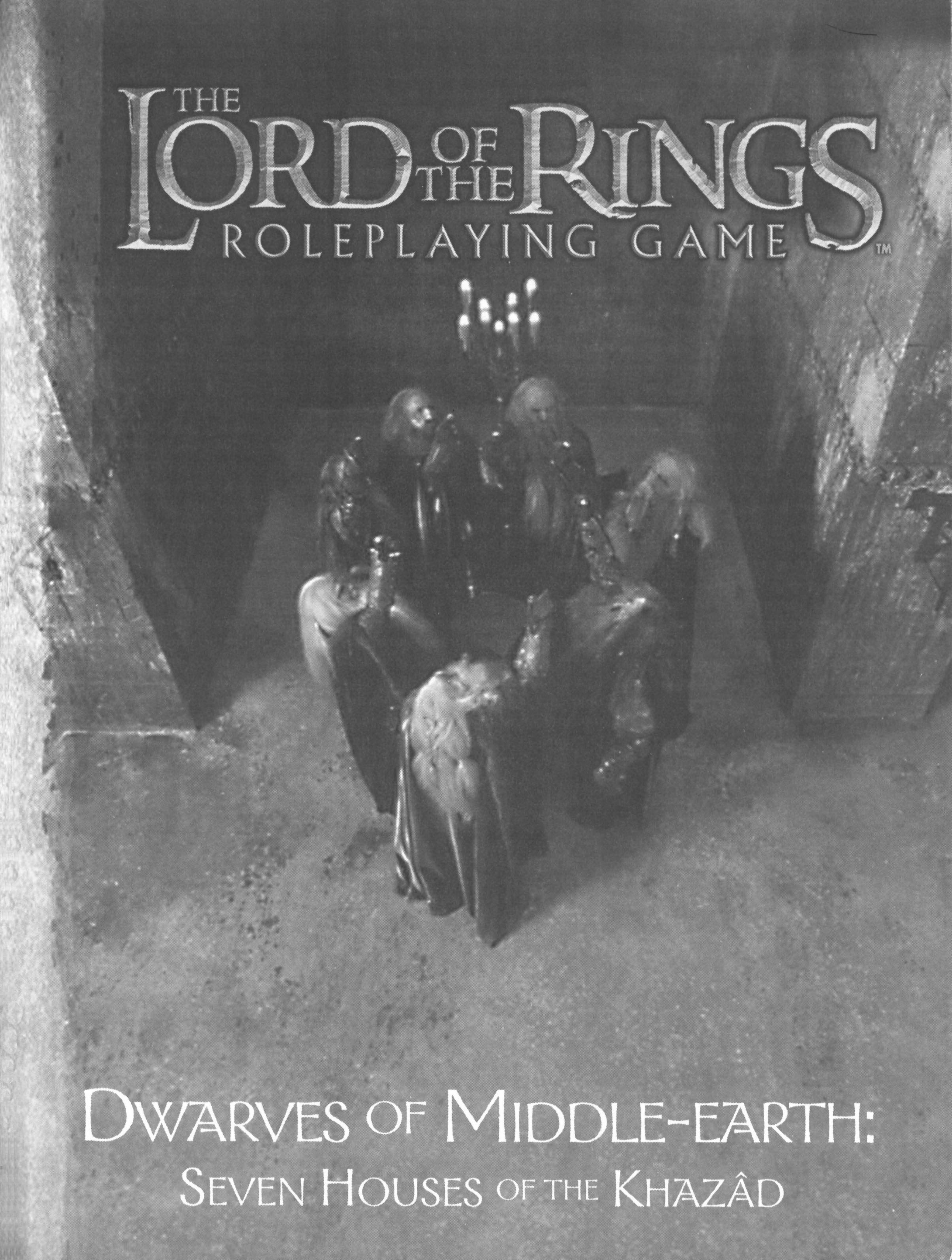
THE LORD OF THE RINGS ROLEPLAYING GAME™

DWARVES OF MIDDLE-EARTH



THE LORD OF THE RINGS ROLEPLAYING GAME™

DWARVES OF MIDDLE-EARTH:

SEVEN HOUSES OF THE KHAZÂD

THE DWARVES OF MIDDLE-EARTH

> *'[Dwarves] are the descendants of the Naugrim of the Elder Days, in whose hearts still burns the ancient fire of Aulë the Smith....'*
>
> *— The Return of the King*

Dwarves are a race apart. Unrelated to Elves or Men, they boast themselves the offspring of a different Maker. A jealous and guarded folk, they speak a secretive tongue they do not willingly unlock to outsiders. They refuse to reveal their true names to even their closest allies. Though the Dwarves are numbered among the Free Peoples, their dealings with other races have rarely been wholehearted or untainted by tragedy.

INTRODUCTION

Passionately wed to honour and unswerving in loyalty, pursuit of these virtues has often plunged Dwarves into the baser passions of pride and avarice. Strong of body and indomitable in spirit, their hardened hearts can also leave them mute to forgiveness and deaf to pity. Enamoured of things made by hands, by cunning, and by magic, too often they fail to esteem the natural world for its own sake and would sooner make it their tool.

Yet in spite of their faults and failings, Dwarves are—for the most part—stalwart foes of the Dark Lord and hardy comrades in battle. In happier times, they keep their weapon-arms strong with hammer and anvil, displaying their skill in matchless works of craft which are prized by all. Always keen to turn a profit, Dwarves are nonetheless ready to seek mutual advantage with their friends and to play their part in the defence of Middle-earth against the threat of Mordor.

OVERVIEW

Before setting out to explore the Mines of Moria, you might first want to learn something about the race that once inhabited them. Who was Durin? How did Moria come to be an Orc-infested dungeon? Where did the Balrog come from?

Some of these questions are answered in greater detail in Chapter One of *Khazad-Dûm: The Delving of Durin's Folk*. But the saga of the Dwarves begins long before the Mines of Moria were delved, and Durin's folk comprise but a seventh part of the whole Dwarf-race. Where did Dwarves come from? Who were the seven Dwarf-lords 'in their halls of stone'? Why is there enmity between Dwarves and Elves? These sorts of questions demand a broader canvass, and the purpose of this book is to provide that.

CHAPTER ONE: THE DWARVES OF YORE gives an overview of Dwarf-history, from the awakening of Durin the Deathless to the eve of the War of the Ring—a span of more than 10,000 years! It explains how things came to be during the time period in which *Khazad-Dûm: The Delving of Durin's Folk* is set. A timeline of principal events is included for quick reference.

CHAPTER TWO: THE SEVEN HOUSES explores in depth the Seven Houses of the Dwarves, profiling the distinctive characteristics of each kindred: their appearance and dress, their attitudes and customs, their place of origin and most notable delvings, their forefathers and heroes, their feuds and friendships, their masterworks and deeds of renown—or infamy. This chapter also provides information on creating Dwarf-heroes from any one of the Seven Houses.

CHAPTER THREE: THE FORGE'S FIRE details some of the most notable artefacts made by Dwarves that might be encountered or used in the course of a game.

DWARF-NAMES

As mentioned above, the Dwarves possess their own secret language (Khuzdul) which they rarely teach to other races. While some Khuzdul words are known to outsiders (mainly the names of places, like 'Khazad-dûm'), no Dwarf would ever reveal his personal name to a non-Dwarf. Because of this, Dwarves adopt 'outer names' for use with outsiders.

Typically, such names are borrowed from the languages of Men or Elf neighbours. So, for example, the Dwarves of Durin's folk are all known by outer names drawn from an ancient tongue once spoken by their Northman allies in Rhovanion. 'Durin' is one such name. So are 'Gimli,' 'Balin,' and 'Thorin.' Similarly 'Telchar,' the name of the famous weaponsmith of Nogrod, is probably of Sindarin origin, since it was with those Elves that the Dwarves of Nogrod had the greatest contact. This book uses only the outer names of the Dwarves.

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Chapter One

THE DWARVES OF YORE

'Concerning the beginning of the Dwarves strange tales are told both by the Eldar and by the Dwarves themselves. . . .'
— *The Return of the King*

For sheer antiquity, the Dwarves must yield pride of place to the Elves, the first Speaking People to tread upon Middle-earth. Nevertheless, the Khazâd awoke from sleep thousands of years before Men came into the world, many ages before the first rising of the Sun and Moon. Of their primordial fashioning by Aulë the Smith (whom they call the Maker), the Dwarves have revealed little to Elves or Men. So we shall begin rather with the awakening of the Seven Fathers.

IN DURIN'S DAY

Each of the Seven Houses of the Khazâd traces its lineage back to a single male ancestor. These progenitors awoke from sleep in pairs, even as the Maker had laid them, beneath tall mountains in far-sundered places across the Northlands of Middle-earth. All, that is, except for Durin, Eldest of the Seven Fathers. He awoke alone, before the others, and wandered the as yet nameless and unpeopled world under the wheeling stars of heaven.

In the course of his wanderings, Durin chanced upon others of his kind, now awakened as he was. These are the names of the Six, given, according to the later custom of Durin's folk, in the ancient northern speech of Men: Úri and Linnar, who awoke in the Blue Mountains of the West; Sindri and Thulin in the Far North; Var and Vigdís in the East of East. With each of the Fathers Durin also found others gathered, both male and female, whereas to Durin there were none he could call his own. He was alone.

Glad was the meeting of the Dwarves, and the folk revered Durin as First and Eldest. Some, indeed, took leave of their own Fathers to join Durin in his wanderings, and in time they grew into a great following. But ere long these leave-takings became a source of distress to the Six, for thus they were deprived of their own and their honour was diminished. Many of Durin's followers, moreover, had begun to marry from lineage to lineage, confusing claims of belonging and succession.

Being both wise and foresighted, Durin summoned all of the Khazâd to that mountain which the Dwarves name (after Durin) Gunduzbad, but which is remembered in the speech of Men as Gundabad. There he held council with the Six for the better ordering of the people. Out of this debate came the covenant known as the Bonds of Blood. The Fathers set boundaries to the leave-taking that had produced Durin's following, and they laid down laws for taking and giving in marriage between kindreds, so that none of the houses should fail. For his part, Durin kept those who still followed him as a kindred to himself. Thus were established the Seven Houses of the Dwarves and the First Union of the Khazâd.

A CROWN OF STARS

Having sworn the Bonds of Blood, the Seven Houses dispersed across the Northlands, each delving a mansion for its abode. In the Blue Mountains of the West, the kindreds of Úri and Linnar, ever fast in friendship, founded Nogrod and Belegost. Durin led his people south from Gundabad to the caves above the Vale of Azanulbizar, where they began the vast delving of Khazad-dûm, famed in legend and song. (Of this, more is said in *Khazad-Dûm: The Delving of Durin's Folk.*)

Back into the Far North Sindri's and Thulin's peoples marched, but they made their dwellings far from one another. Sindri's people delved Gamil-nâla under Mount Bundushar, while Thulin's folk founded Kibil-tarag beyond the Frozen Sea. These remote places have no names in the tongues of Men or Elves.

Var and Vigdís hollowed their cities beneath the mountains of the uttermost East. At the roots of Mount Nargubraz, Var's folk made their home. Vigdis's house sought a stronger fastness: Baraz-lagil, where the red stone runs.

Such was the dispersion of the Khazâd in the unmarked passage of time before Sun and Moon. During this age, the creatures of Morgoth—Orcs and Trolls and other fell beasts—often harassed the Dwarves. In their struggles, they grew battle-hardened and skilled in armoury. But at that time, Morgoth's minions still lacked the resolve to become a serious threat to the Dwarves.

It was the folk of Úri and Linnar that first entered into friendship—if such it can be called—with an Elf-people. Thingol of Doriath, king of the Grey Elves, received the service of the Dwarves for the arming and defence of his people, for not long afterwards Orcs assailed Beleriand. This the Dwarves did not only in exchange for treasures the mountains did not yield to them, but also for knowledge. It was Daeron, minstrel and loremaster of Thingol, who first instructed the Dwarves in the use of Cirth, the runic alphabet which gradually spread east into Eriador and Rhovanion.

All too soon, the return of Morgoth to his fortress of Thangorodrim brought this fruitful exchange to an end. Under his sway, the depredations of Orcs and other evil creatures against the Free Peoples quickened. The blades of Nogrod and the armour of Belegost stood Thingol in good stead during this dark time. Although the Enemy was eventually driven out of Beleriand, the ingress of so great a menace drove the Dwarves back into their hidden halls, and much time passed before they again emerged to traffic with the Elves. When they did so, their eyes beheld a changed world: the Ages of the Sun had begun.

The Dwarves call Durin 'the Deathless,' for he lived far beyond the span allotted to his race. Accounts differ as to the time of his passing, and the days of his life have never been reckoned. Some claim that he departed long before the first rising of the Sun. Others say that his life endured the great changing, though not the end of the Elder Days.

Whatever the truth, Durin's legacy is still maintained by his heirs. It is said that even after the Ages of Stars ended, the crown of stars which the Deathless had descried in the dark waters of Kheled-zâram—the Mirrormere in the Dimrill Dale below the gates of Moria—remained undimmed for all to see, a testimony of the world as it was in its youth.

THE WARS OF BELERIAND

The long wars the Elves waged against Morgoth for the great jewels of Fëanor are now the subjects of legend. In those epic struggles, the Dwarves of the Blue Mountains played no small part. Telchar, the renowned weaponsmith of Nogrod, forged Narsil and other mighty blades for the ruin of Thangorodrim. In that age too, Dragons came into the world, the bane of many a Dwarf, though the worms did not wholly escape their first taste of Dwarvish steel.

Of these great matters there is not space to speak, save one that cannot be passed over: the murder of King

Thingol of Doriath. Having re-established ties with Úri's folk, the Grey-elf commanded craftsmen from Nogrod to set one of the Silmarils into a necklace the Dwarves had formerly owned and still claimed. A heated argument ensued between the Elvenking and Úri's folk over rightful ownership of the treasure, and the king was slain.

War swiftly kindled between Doriath and Nogrod, though Linnar's folk wisely kept their hands unstained from the fighting. The near total destruction of the adult male population of Nogrod followed, a devastating blow to Úri's kindred, which would never recover its former strength. Though Úri's folk alone were to blame for this infamy, their foul crime and the retribution they suffered for it cast a shadow over all future relations between Dwarves and Elves, tainting any friendship that might have been and poisoning the union of the Free Peoples.

Dwarves did not take part in the Great Battle in which the Elf-host of Valinor and its Mannish allies finally overthrew Morgoth, yet that titanic conflict had grave consequences for the Khazâd. In the convulsions of Thangorodrim's downfall, the whole of Beleriand foundered beneath destroying seas, and the Dwarf-cities of Belegost and Nogrod suffered irreparable violence in the reshaping of the coastline. The fall of Morgoth also drove many Orcs eastward as they sought new lairs in Eriador and Rhovanion at a time when Úri and Linnar's peoples were most vulnerable.

DURIN WAKES AGAIN

Not all was dark amid the tumults of that time. An heir was born to Durin's line, so near in likeness to his progenitor that many Dwarves said that in him the Deathless had returned. In token of this, he received the name of Durin. It was prophesied that he would beat back the evils the Khazâd were then suffering and that in his day the Folk of Durin would be blessed with increase and wealth.

Durin II was born on the threshold of winter, on the first day of the last moon of autumn (as it was later reckoned). That day was marked by a coincidence of heavenly bodies: the Sun and Moon visible in the sky together. Thereafter, if this celestial event occurred at the close of autumn, the Dwarves called it 'Durin's Day.' Any Dwarf born on that day was considered fortunate. Moreover, if an heir of Durin's line came into the world under that apparition, he too was named Durin. By chance or providence, such a child invariably bore the likeness of the Deathless.

When Durin II came of age, he convoked a great Union of the Khazâd, the first since the Bonds of Blood had been sworn. In the course of their incursions, the Orcs of Morgoth had lately seized and occupied the halls of Gundabad and were doing great injury to all the Seven Houses. Durin II called for war against these aggressors, and the kindreds roared in favour in unison. So befell the first great War of the Dwarves and the Orcs. It was principally fought in the Grey Mountains, though victories were also achieved in the Blue Mountains and in the lands of Sindri's folk.

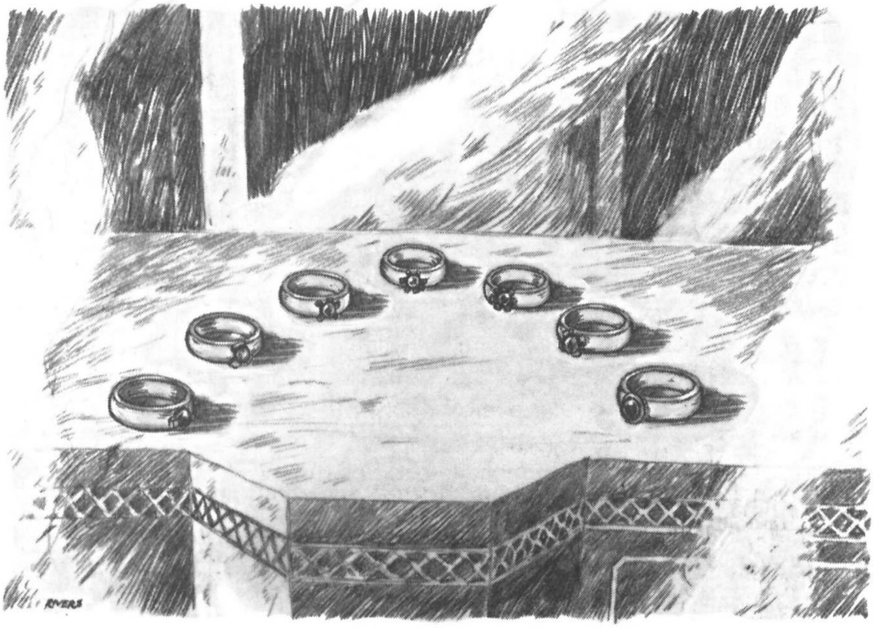
In this war, the Dwarves took as allies the Free Men of the North, distant kinsfolk of the Edain who aided the Elves against Morgoth. Fell in battle, these Northmen were also instrumental in provisioning the Dwarves during the critical siege of Gundabad. In the wake of victory, the Seven Houses disbanded to their own lands. But many of the folk of Linnar—and most of the surviving folk of Úri who had weathered the earlier war with the Elves—abandoned their ruined cities, migrated to Khazad-dûm, and took Durin II for their lord. The heirs of Úri and Linnar delved new halls for the remnants of their kindreds in the extreme northern and southern reaches of the Blue Mountains, where they eked out an honourable, though by no means glorious, existence.

Durin's folk prospered during the early years of the Second Age. The greatest surviving weaponsmiths of Nogrod and armourers of Belegost augmented the forges of Khazad-dûm. The fruits of Mannish agriculture and herding fed the swelling populace of Khazad-dûm. In return, works of Dwarf-masonry and metallurgy bettered the Northmen's lives. It was at this time that people of Durin first took outer names in the Northman tongue and adopted the reckoning of the Mannish calendar. While the alliance held fast, the depredations of the Orcs were stayed and came to naught.

But the greatest blessing of Durin II's reign was the discovery of *mithril*, most treasured of all metals. Only in the mountains of the Dwarrowdelf was it to be found, in deep veins that only the skill of the Dwarves might unlock. For many years Durin's folk wrought this silver-steel in secret, transfiguring it into shapes fair and wonderful. But Durin's heirs were open-handed in those hopeful days, and in time they began to make gifts of it to kings and princes with whom they maintained ties of courtesy. In this way, knowledge of *mithril* reached the Noldor in Lindon, and from that awareness sprang the greatest friendship that ever would be between Dwarves and Elves.

SEVEN RINGS

Of the forging of the Rings of Power and Sauron's war with the Elves of Eregion, more is said in *Khazad-Dûm: The Delving of Durin's Folk*. Following that war, Sauron—defeated in the Westlands—dedicated the next fourteen centuries to extending his dominion over the North, East and South of Middle-earth. In addition to sheer terror and



military might, the Lord of Mordor also deployed the Rings of Power he had seized in Eregion as a means of subverting resistance to his rule. Since Men were the chief object of his domination during these years, he distributed Nine Rings first, giving birth to the Nazgûl. The Dwarves were next.

After more than two hundred years of Orkish occupation, Gundabad was at last liberated by the Third Union of the Khazâd, convoked by Durin IV, who had patiently repaired the strength of his people in the aftermath of the wasting of Eregion. Their victory was not complete. Many Orc-holds still infested the Grey Mountains, and the Northmen remained scattered and weak. But the ability of the Dwarves to thwart Sauron's will enraged him. Having met with such signal success in enslaving Men by the Rings, the Dark Lord laid his plans to do the same with the six Dwarf-rings he had acquired.

He did not give these rings openly to any of the Dwarf-lords. Instead, they received them by stealth and deception—or through couriers who did not reveal the source of these rare treasures. Of the First of the Seven, which he had not found, Sauron knew nothing, save for the fact that it was not being worn. He guessed rightly that Celebrimbor had bestowed it upon Durin's heir, but Durin could wait. Sauron would bring him under his power in good time.

So Sauron plotted, but his plans came to nothing. As soon as the Dwarf-fathers set their Rings upon their fingers, the Dark Lord found them impervious to his command. Nor, as time would reveal, could they be reduced to wraiths like mortal Men. The Khazâd were made of a sterner stuff than even Sauron could master. All he could achieve by the Rings was an enlargement of the more divisive aspects of Dwarf-nature: greed, vainglory, and vengefulness. In the end, that alone proved sufficient for Sauron to bring ruin upon all the Dwarf-kindreds.

The unwholesome power of the Rings set to work upon their wearers swiftly. Strife erupted among the descendants of Úri and Linnar in the Blue Mountains, until rivalry drove Úri's heir to seek the protection of Khazad-dûm. But restlessness did not depart from the heart of Brúni, lord of Linnar's folk. He too abandoned his meagre halls in search of greater wealth, wandering into the Vale of Angmar, where he founded the mighty delving of Barazbizar (Carn Dûm), a name of many future sorrows.

In the frozen North, Thulin's people grew more reclusive and unfriendly toward outsiders—even other Dwarves. Sindri's ring had quite a different effect on the folk of Gamil-nâla. They became mercenary in their dealings, until their king was willing to treat openly with the Lord of the Rings. For gifts of silver and gold and precious stones, the weaponsmiths of Sindri's folk armed the Easterlings with iron, furthering the dominion of Mordor over Middle-earth.

In the Mountains of the East, a bloody feud befell the Sons of Var and Vigdís. So deeply did they become mired in vendetta and reprisal that the original grievance that sparked the war receded into irreparable oblivion. Barazlagil ran with blood, and the halls of Nargubraz were blackened from the pyres of the slain, for there was no respite to inter the fallen properly.

Such was the condition to which Sauron reduced the Khazâd. For a thousand years and more, isolation, complicity, or barbarism neutralized any threat the Dwarves might have posed to the Dark Lord's designs. That was well for Mordor, for as the age drew to its close, a new foe arose whose fate consumed all of Sauron's will and wiles: the Men of Númenor.

The tale of Sauron's overthrow of that race is told in the *Akallabêth*, a copy of which is held by the Tooks of the Shire in the Great Smials. His victory reached its climax in the Drowning of Númenor. In that cataclysm, the lands of Middle-earth were shaken to their uttermost foundations. The Dwarf-mansions of the Blue Mountains once again suffered ruin. The peninsula on which Kibil-tarag was delved separated from the continent, making it accessible thereafter only by the Frozen Sea in midwinter. Mount Bundushar collapsed upon Gamil-nâla, burying Sindri's greatest city and many of his folk beneath miles of rock. Only in the East did the cataclysm render some belated benefit to the Khazâd. A great rift in the mountains clove in twain the lands of the warring kindreds, as though the earth itself were pleading for the cessation of their feud.

THE LAST ALLIANCE

During the final century of the Second Age, Sauron quietly rebuilt his strength in Mordor while the Númenórean exiles founded the realms of Gondor and Arnor. Then he attacked. In response, the Free Peoples formed the Last Alliance. Though mainly an affair of Men and Elves, Dwarves were not absent from it—nor, sad to say, from the ranks of the Enemy.

Ever the foe of Mordor, Durin V attempted to convoke a Fourth Union of the Khazâd in support of the Allies, but was only partially successful. The greatest part of the Dwarf-host that joined the Alliance came from Durin's folk, including those of Úri's kindred who now dwelt among them. No aid would Linnar's heir give, nor Thulin's, nor Vigdís's. Some few warriors of Sindri's battered people heeded the summons. However, most followed their king in siding with Mordor, charging that Durin had made himself the vassal of Gil-galad and Elendil—no longer the Father of the Khazâd. Similar justifications were proffered by Var's folk, whom Sauron promised to aid in the extermination of Vigdis's kindred if they would fight for him.

Support for the Dark Lord by the Dwarves proved shallow and ephemeral. After the victory of the Last Alliance at Dagorlad, those of Sindri and Var's traitorous warriors who still lived broke into shameful flight, unwilling to fight further in the Enemy's hopeless cause. The Allied Dwarves put down most of these renegades, but Sindri's heir retreated with his bodyguard to the nearby fastness of Nurunkhizdín and was forgotten to history.

RETURN OF THE SHADOW

When a thousand years of the Third Age had passed, Sauron's vanquished spirit began to grow again, infesting Greenwood the Great and gradually transforming it into Mirkwood. Since the fall of Barad-dûr, the Northmen of Rhovanion had regained the strength and numbers they had enjoyed in the ancient days of their alliance with Durin's folk. They still maintained friendship and commerce with the Dwarves, but they no longer looked to the Khazâd for defence, turning instead to the rising power of Gondor.

As for the Dwarves, they prospered under the millennium of respite from the Dark Lord's presence. Yet there was little contact among the Seven Houses during this period, each kindred looking after its own affairs. This was soon to change, as Sauron's hostile will began to reassert itself over the world, stirring all wicked creatures to wakefulness. The chief object of Sauron's malice was not the Dwarves, but the exiles of Númenor who had been responsible for his most recent defeat. The weaker of the two Dúnadan realms, Arnor, was his first target. Unfortunately for the Khazâd, their most sacred stronghold, Gundabad, stood in the path of the Dark Lord's invasion.

At the imperceptible prompting of Sauron's will, the Orcs of the North began to filter southwards into the Grey Mountains, until their numbers were great enough to assail the delvings of Durin's folk there. Before Durin's heir could take counter-measures to defend his people, the Orcs pressed further south, seizing the High Pass of the Misty Mountains. Having driven a wedge between Khazad-dûm and its northern colonies, Sauron unleashed his most terrible servant, the Lord of the Nazgûl, who—at the head of an army of Easterlings—marched unopposed across northern Rhovanion to Mount Gundabad and captured it by siege and sorcery.

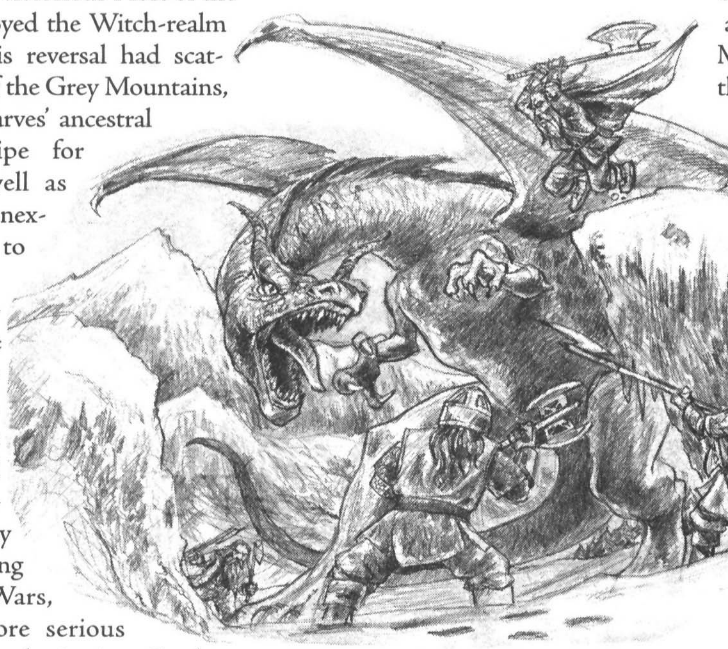
Crossing the Misty Mountains by the Pass of Gundabad, the future Witch-king occupied the Vale of Angmar with his armies. Barazbizar, the mansion of Linnar's heir, was betrayed to the Wraith-lord from within. Thus was Linnar's ring the first of the Seven to be recovered by Sauron. Some believe that by this time he had already come into possession of Sindri's ring, but the fate of the Dwarves of Nurunkhizdín and that ring remains a mystery.

As Durin's heir prepared to convoke the Khazâd to reclaim Gundabad from the Orcs, new evils thwarted him. The Dragons of Morgoth, aroused by Sauron from four thousand years of slumber, reappeared in the Far North of Middle-earth, hungry for flesh and greedy for gold. Thulin and Sindri's folk were hardest hit by the first assaults of the worms, but in time their fire spread along the Mountains of the East to the strife-torn domains of both Var and Vigdís. Having twice bled for Durin's honour, the afflicted houses now demanded requital. If a Union of the Khazâd were to assemble, it must be for the defence of the East and North against the Dragons.

So ensued the Dragon Wars, which spanned many centuries and many generations of Dwarves. Twice the Khazâd united to halt the progress of the worms, but never did they prove strong enough to drive the beasts back from lands that had already been lost. Kibil-tarag became a breeding pit for Dragons. Thulin's heir—together with his ring—was devoured, and his folk were scattered. A similar fate awaited the heirs of Var and Vigdís, though their kindreds remained united, the menace of the worms persuading them at length to renounce their feud.

THE TIME OF AFFLICTIONS

The ruin of Khazad-dûm by the Balrog is described in *Khazad-dûm: The Delving of Durin's Folk*. The exilic wanderings of Durin's folk precipitated by this tragedy were led by Thráin—Durin's surviving heir—who brought his people into the North. Only six years earlier, the victorious Host of the West had destroyed the Witch-realm of Angmar. This reversal had scattered the Orcs of the Grey Mountains, leaving the Dwarves' ancestral holds there ripe for recapture, as well as opening many unexplored regions to settlement.



The remnants of the Orcs were swiftly driven off. But Scatha the Worm, who had taken up residence in the Grey Mountains during the Dragon Wars, remained a more serious impediment to colonisation. Scatha laired at Makalkukhizdín, an ancient Dwarf-hold the Orcs occupied when Gundabad was lost. The Dragon had long since devoured the Orcs that had been there, and with the recent expulsion of that race from the mountains, the worm now turned upon the newcomers to fill his gluttony.

Scatha did not single out the Dwarves for his depredations. The desolation of Angmar attracted other would-be colonists to the North: the Northmen of Éothéod, led by Frumgar and his son Fram. Scatha soon began preying upon the fields and homesteads of these frontiersmen, but he had little knowledge of Men and could not countenance the boldness to which his attacks might drive them. So it was that the worm was taken by surprise in his own lair and slain by the spear of young Fram.

Such a deed might have forged enduring friendship between Durin's folk and the Northmen, as had held in olden days. Instead, without word of thanks or gift of gratitude, the Dwarves coldly demanded that Fram surrender to them all the treasures of Makalkukhizdín that Scatha had hoarded for his bedding. The young hero repaid their haughtiness in kind, sending to Thráin a necklace strung of worm's teeth, saying: 'Jewels such as these you will not match in your treasuries, for they are hard to come by.' In a rage unbefitting the dignity of Durin's heir, Thráin declared Fram the thief of his treasure, and soon thereafter the Dwarves murdered the Northman. By this shameful act, the exiles of Moria made an enemy of a people who might have proved invaluable allies against hardships to come.

Thráin himself took up the rule of Durin's folk at Erebor, where he discovered the Arkenstone and became 'King under the Mountain.' Most of the exiles, however, were then gathering in the mountains beyond. As the numbers and dwellings of his people increased, Thráin gave leave for his son Thorin to govern the people from the newly delved mansion of Thakalgund. When Thráin died ninety years later, the lordship of the exiles formally shifted to Thakalgund, and there Thorin kept the Arkenstone and the ring of his house.

The initial successes of Durin's folk in the North proved a false dawn, for tidings of new wealth eventually reached the ears of the Dragons that prowled the wastes where Thulin's kindred once ruled. Some four centuries after the re-colonisation of the Grey Mountains began, the worms launched their attacks. The first Dwarf-citadel to fall was Zeleg-ubraz, sacked by Vegandi the Winged-slayer. Fifteen years later, Daudi the Death-drake desolated Danuk-khizdín. The defenders of Thakalgund were more resilient, and King Dáin—the great-great-grandson of Thorin—won eternal renown for single-handedly ending the wrath of Brædi. But such fortune could not be counted upon a second time, and Dáin was slain together with Frór, his second son, before the doors of Thakalgund by Skell the Besieger. In a heroic last stand, Kúri, Lord of the folk of Úri who dwelt among Durin's kindred, denied to Skell the passage of Nuril-lagil, his death purchasing time for the exiles to escape the Grey Mountains with their lives. Defeated, the Dwarves abandoned the North. Thrór, eldest son of Dáin, led the greater part of the people back to Erebor, while his surviving younger brother, Grór, colonised the Iron Hills with the remainder.

Sobered by their sufferings, Durin's folk repented of their folly in casting aside the friendship of Men. There followed the Golden Age of Erebor, during which—in renewed fellowship with their neighbours—the exiles almost forgot their misfortunes, and the King under the Mountain received honour from lords of many lands: from Girion of Dale and Bladorthin of Dorwinion, from Woodmen of the Anduin vales and Rivermen of the Celduin, and even from Thranduil, the Elf-king of Mirkwood.

But scarcely two centuries after the re-founding of Erebor, Smaug the Golden descended upon the kingdom of the Dwarves and desolated it. Once again, Durin's folk were forced into exile.

With the North now barred to them, the weary Dwarves journeyed out of Rhovanion and westward into Eriador. Most migrated to the Blue Mountains, but Thrór, Thráin, and Thráin's children took up residence in Dunland. These were poorer lodgings, but they were within sight of the mountains of Moria, toward which they ever turned in longing. Thrór—now besotted with age and perhaps addled in his wits—passed on his ring to his son Thráin and, with but a single companion, dared the doors of Moria.

No sooner did Thrór set foot within the Dimrill Gate than he discovered that Orcs had occupied the upper halls of Moria. He was taken at once and beheaded by the Orc-king Azog, who dishonoured Thrór's corpse and cast it outside the gates for his companion to see. When word reached Thráin of what had befallen—and after he had mourned the loss of his father—he sent forth messengers to convoke the Sixth Union of the Khazâd. 'For Durin's heir,' he said, 'is Eldest, the Father of all, and so his avenging is the duty of all.'

Thus ensued the second great War of the Dwarves and the Orcs, which raged unabated for six bloody years. From Gundabad to Azanulbizar, the mountains ran with Orc blood, until Azog was slain at last before the very gates where he had cast Thrór's body. Victory fell to the Dwarves, but their own slain were beyond count.

Thráin besought the Khazâd to press their vengeance yet further and

TIMELINE: HISTORY OF THE DWARVES

ELDER DAYS

- Durin the Deathless, Eldest of the Seven Fathers, wakes from sleep.
- The other Six Fathers wake.
- First Union of the Khazâd (the Bonds of Blood).
- The Seven Houses delve mansions.
- Folk of Úri and Linnar traffic with the Elves of Beleriand.
- Telchar of Nogrod forges Narsil and many other works of renown.
- War is kindled between Úri's folk and Doriath for the murder of Thingol. This sparks future enmity between Elves and Dwarves.
- The Host of Valinor overthrows Morgoth in the Great Battle. Belegost and Nogrod are ruined.

SECOND AGE

c. 40	Second Union of the Khazâd. Gundabad retaken from Orcs. Alliance of Dwarves and Men forged in Rhovanion.
750	Noldor found Eregion beside Moria. Friendship rises between Elf-smiths and Durin's folk.
1200	Sauron comes to Eregion.
c. 1500	Elf-smiths forge Rings of Power.
c. 1600	Sauron secretly forges the One Ring.
1693	War of the Elves and Sauron begins. First of the Seven Rings entrusted to Durin III.
1697	Eregion laid waste. Six of the Seven Rings captured by Sauron.
1699	Gundabad taken by Orcs. End of Dwarf-Northman alliance.
c. 1800	Dark Years begin.
1932	Third Union of the Khazâd. Gundabad retaken.
c. 2100	Sauron bestows six of the Seven Rings on the Dwarf-lords.
2797	Sindri's folk expel their king and other Dwarves who side with Sauron. These exiles found Nurunkhizdín.
2911	Linnar's folk found Barazbizar (Carn Dûm) in Angmar.
3319	Global cataclysm follows drowning of Númenor.
c. 3400	All of Var's and many of Sindri's folk seduced into open alliance with Mordor.
3434	Dwarves fight (on both sides) at Dagorlad.

THIRD AGE

58	An unknown evil befalls Nurunkhizdín, and news of the renegades ceases. Sindri's ring passes out of all knowledge.
1289	Scatha sacks Makalkukhizdín.
1302	Gundabad taken by Orcs.
1307	Witch-king occupies Angmar and captures Barazbizar. Linnar's ring comes into Sauron's possession.
c. 1650	The Dragon Wars begin. Fourth and Fifth Unions of the Khazâd.

THIRD AGE (CONTINUED)

1712	Thulin's ring and heir devoured by a worm. Legacy of the dragonslayers born.
1981	The Balrog desolates Moria. Durin's folk go into exile.
1999	Thráin founds Erebor.
c. 2000	Fram slays Scatha but falls victim to Dwarf-malice.
2063	Sauron flees Dol Guldur into the East, where he takes refuge at Nargubraz.
2460	Saruman helps Var and Vigdis's folk to expel Sauron from Nargubraz.
c. 2480	Sauron begins to colonise the upper levels of Moria with his minions.
c. 2570	Time of Afflictions begins. Dragons capture the Dwarf holds of the Grey Mountains.
2589	Dáin and Frór slain by Skell. Kúri perishes while holding the Pass of Nuril-lagil.
2590	Thrór returns to Erebor. Grór colonises the Iron Hills.
c. 2600	Golden Age of Erebor begins. Dale founded.
2770	Smaug desolates Erebor and Dale.
2790	Thrór slain by Azog.
2793	Sixth Union of the Khazâd. War of the Dwarves and Orcs begins.
2795	Gundabad retaken.
2799	Battle of Dimrill Dale (Nanduhirion). Dáin Ironfoot becomes Lord of the Iron Hills.
2801	Thráin abandons Gundabad and settles in the Blue Mountains.
2841	Thráin waylaid by Sauron's minions.
2842	Orcs retake Gundabad under Bolg.
2845	Thráin taken to Dol Guldur. Sauron holds three of the Seven Rings (the other four were devoured by Dragons).
2850	Gandalf discovers Thráin and obtains the key and map to Erebor.
2941	Quest of Erebor. Battle of Five Armies. Dáin becomes King under the Mountain.
2989	Balin attempts to re-colonise Moria.
3018	The War of the Ring begins.

attempt the recapture of Moria, but this they were unwilling to do. They had come only to avenge the injury to their common honour, and they would not bleed for the furtherance of Thráin's own glory. Having achieved their object, the Seven Houses dispersed, and Dáin son of Náin led most of Durin's folk back to the Iron Hills. Bereft of sufficient manpower to guard Gundabad, Thráin reluctantly abandoned it and resumed his restless wandering.

It was not long before Thráin succumbed to the same madness that brought about Thrór's death. If Moria was denied him, he would yet look upon the glories of Erebor before he died. Unlike Thrór, Thráin kept his ring and did not pass it on to Thorin his son. Perhaps this was for the better, for as Thráin journeyed north, the servants of Sauron hunted him. Finally he was captured and taken to Dol Guldur, where the ring was seized from him—the last of the Seven to remain free, even as it had been the first to be given.

Thráin perished then in the dungeons of the Dark Lord, but not before he was discovered by an intruder to whom the dying Dwarf entrusted his only remaining possessions: the map and key to the secret door of Erebor. Fortunately for Thráin, that intruder was none other than the Wizard Gandalf, spying out Dol Guldur for reasons of his own.

EREBOR AND AFTER

The details of Thorin Oakenshield's quest to recover Erebor from Smaug are well known from the pages of Bilbo Baggins's memoirs. The death of the Dragon and the struggle over his treasure culminated in the Battle of Five Armies, in which Thorin was slain but the Orcs defeated. Dáin Ironfoot, avenger of Thrór, became King under the Mountain and Father of Durin's folk, restoring peace for a brief time to the troubled Northlands.

Yet the lure of Moria could not be exorcised from the hearts of the Dwarves. Forty-eight years after the restoration of Erebor, Balin son of Fundin—whose father had fallen in Azanulbizar before the Dimrill Gate—resolved to re-colonise the halls of Durin. With a company of like-minded Dwarves, he turned his back on the light of Erebor to see what lay within the darkness of Dwarrowdelf. The previous chapter presented several glimpses of the history and deeds of the Seven Houses of the Khazâd. Now it's time to take a closer look at each kindred in turn. What distinguishes one Dwarf-tribe from another? What passions and longings motivate the scions of each line? How do they regard one another? What are their attitudes towards other races? In what unique skills and abilities does each house excel? These are all important questions when you're trying to decide what kind of Dwarf-adventurer you'd like to play.

Chapter Two

THE SEVEN HOUSES

'Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone. . . .'
— The Fellowship of the Ring

The details in this chapter are based upon the general information about the Dwarf-race found in *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* core rulebook (pages 60–62) and are designed as a supplement to that text. For example, all Dwarves, irrespective of kindred, receive a +2 adjustment for Strength and Vitality. If a particular kindred receives additional attribute adjustments unique to it, this is noted here, whereas the generic +2 Strength/Vitality adjustment is not mentioned. Adjustments are cumulative, so when you start designing a Dwarf-character, you should refer to both this chapter and the core ruleook.

To help you navigate, here's a quick reference table for identifying who's who and which pages their houses are discussed on.

DURIN'S FOLK

'Durin is the name that the Dwarves used for the eldest of the Seven Fathers of their race. . . .'
— The Return of the King

The Dwarf-kindred best known to Elves and Men of the Westlands of Middle-earth is Durin's folk. Also called the Longbeards—not only for the length of their beards, but also for their peculiar longevity—Durin's people are the most physically diverse of the Seven Houses. This is in part because of their eclectic origin and in part due to later influxes of other kindreds into their number, most notably from Úri and Linnar's folk. They pride themselves less on the purity of their breed than on the aura of reverence they enjoy thanks to their illustrious ancestor.

NATURE

Durin's folk are accounted the wisest and most farsighted of the Dwarves. The other kindreds naturally attribute this to the eminence of the Deathless himself, but equally determinative has been their ancient league of friendship with the Noldor of Eregion and the Northmen of Rhovanion. These factors have rendered them less introverted and more flexible in their ways than most of the Khazâd.

In fact, the culture of the Longbeards has been profoundly shaped by frequent contact and collaboration with the rest of the Free Peoples. From the Noldor they adapted a more refined version of Daeron's runic alphabet, to which they themselves gave further aesthetic enhancements. (See the table of runes on the back cover of this book.) From the Northmen they took their calendar and their own outer names. Most importantly, their association with the Free Peoples has left Durin's folk impervious to the blandishments of Sauron, whose emissaries they have never hearkened to.

Still, the Longbeards are by no means exempt from the failings of their race. Since the Time of Afflictions began, a life of exile has diminished their nobility. In their struggles to recover their former possessions, lust for gold and revenge has robbed them of common sense and driven them to folly, poisoning the trust of would-be allies and even estranging them from their own kinsfolk. From great heights of wealth and plenitude, the downfall is also great.

LANDS AND LORE

In the days of Durin the Deathless, the Longbeards colonised all the mountains encompassing Rhovanion: east from Gundabad to the Iron Hills, and south as far as the Dimrill Dale. By the late Third Age, most of these lands have been lost. Only Erebor and the Iron Hills remain to them. During various phases of their exile, many of Durin's folk have also migrated west to the safety of the Blue Mountains, though no great mansions were delved there. Recently, Balin of Erebor launched a failed attempt to recolonise Moria.

Next to Khazad-dûm, the greatest delving of Durin's folk by far is surely Erebor, the Lonely Mountain. The ancient halls of Gundabad may be more hallowed, but they are dark and silent since they were cleansed of Orcs. The Longbeards have not the strength to hold this sacred citadel, so they sealed its doors and blocked its passageways, hoping to preserve it unstained for a time of plenty that may never come. In the Iron Hills, Barukkhizdín remains the bulwark of Durin's people, and it has never been taken by assault.

The Longbeards maintain that the Deathless is reborn into the world through his descendants, and five times in the history of his folk, an heir has been born to Durin's line on Durin's Day: when the sun and moon are visible together in the sky on November 1st, an irregular event difficult to predict. This child invariably bears the likeness of his ancestor and so receives his name.

The sixth and most recent Durin to appear perished at the hands of the Balrog more than a thousand years ago. Many of the Longbeards believe that Khazad-dûm cannot be restored to them until a seventh Durin, 'The Last,' is born. It is held, moreover, that in his lifetime, a seventh and final Union of the Khazâd will be convoked to effect this restoration. Not all of Durin's folk put faith in this prophecy. Some, like Balin son of Fundin, are not content to wait on such prediction and believe the Dwarves must take destiny into their own hands and bring it about without delay.

OUTER SPEECH

In addition to Khuzdul, the Longbeards speak Westron. Durin's folk are unique among the Seven Houses in their employment of a 'Noldorised' runic alphabet—known as the Cirth or Angerthas—which they use for all inscriptions in stone, metal, and wood. The form or 'mode' of this script has undergone change over the centuries. The 'Mode of Erebor' is the form now generally used by the Longbeards.

OUTER NAMES

Bláin, Brúni, Dulin, Fár, Farli, Finn, Galar, Ginnar, Linn, Liómi, Loki, Nabbi, Oxdís, Pabbi, Rekk, Skirvir, Thekk, Tindri, Vali, Vegg, Vigg, Vinn, Virvir.

HOUSES OF THE DWARVES

HOUSE	HOMELAND	CHIEF DELVING	SEE PAGES
Durin	Misty/Grey Mountains	Khazad-dûm	13-15
Úri	Blue Mountains	Nogrod	15-16
Linnar	Blue Mountains	Belegost	17-18
Sindri	Far North	Gamil-nâla	18-21
Thulin	Far North	Kibil-tarag	21-24
Var	East of East	Nargubraz	24-26
Vigdís	East of East	Baraz-lagil	26-27

FATHERS OF RENOWN

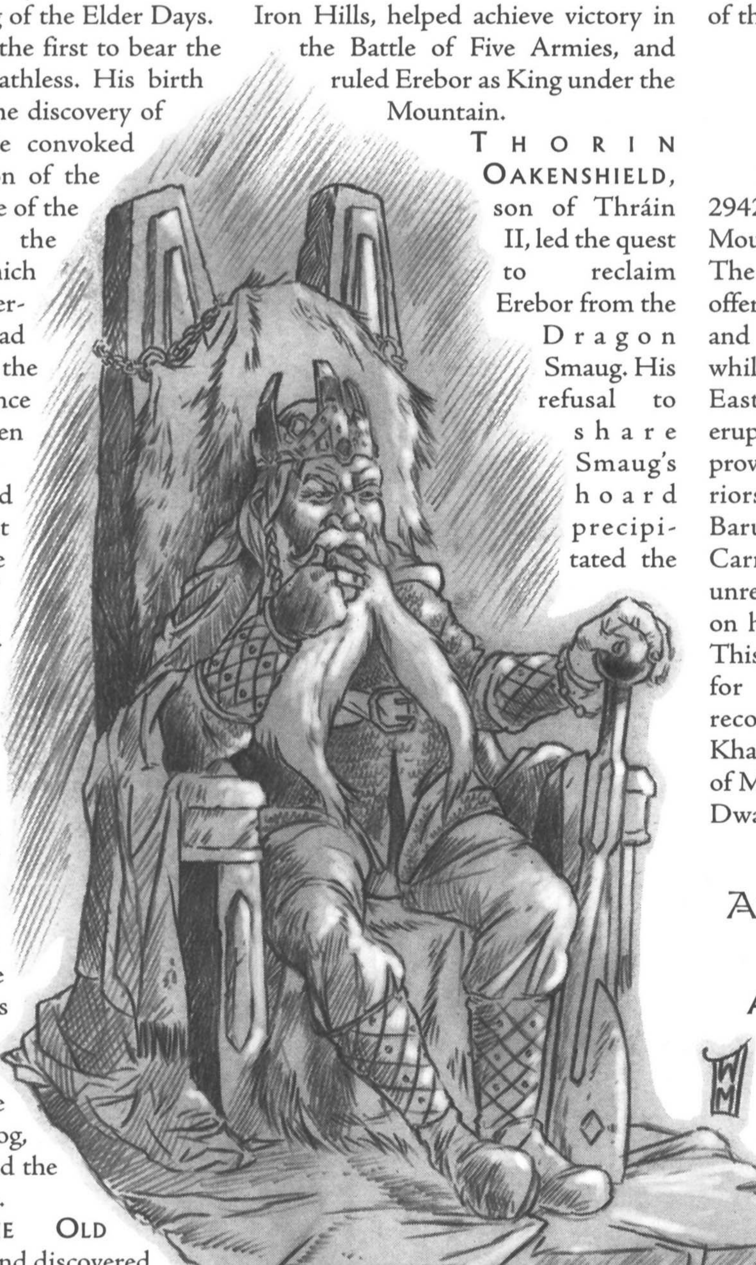
DURIN THE DEATHLESS was the first Dwarf to awake from sleep. He convoked the First Union of the Khazâd and established the Seven Houses through the Bonds of Blood. He also founded Khazad-dûm. He lived longer than any Dwarf but died before the passing of the Elder Days.

DURIN II was the first to bear the image of the Deathless. His birth also occasioned the discovery of 'Durin's Day.' He convoked the Second Union of the Khazâd in defence of the North against the Orc-invasions, which resulted in the liberation of Gundabad and the birth of the Longbeards' alliance with the Northmen of Rhovanion.

DURIN III ruled Khazad-dûm at the height of the Longbeards' friendship with the Elf-smiths of Eregion. Celebrimbor entrusted the First of the Seven Rings to his care.

DURIN VI abandoned the wisdom of his fathers and used his ring to locate new *mithril* veins beneath Caradhras. His folly led to the release of the Balrog, his own death, and the exile of his people.

THRÁIN THE OLD founded Erebor and discovered the Arkenstone.



THRÁIN II convoked the Sixth Union of the Khazâd to avenge the death of his father, Thrór, which led to the War of the Dwarves and the Orcs. Later, while seeking to return to Erebor, he was captured by Sauron's minions and his ring was taken from him. Before he died, he gave to Gandalf the map and key to Erebor, ultimately enabling the Erebor Quest to succeed.

DÁIN II IRONFOOT slew Azog the Orc-king at the Battle of Azanulbizar. Thereafter he became Lord of the Iron Hills, helped achieve victory in the Battle of Five Armies, and ruled Erebor as King under the Mountain.

THORIN OAKENSHIELD, son of Thráin II, led the quest to reclaim Erebor from the Dragon Smaug. His refusal to share Smaug's hoard precipitated the Battle of Five Armies, in which he was slain by the Orcs.

BALIN, companion of Thorin Oakenshield in the Erebor Quest, later led a bold but ultimately unsuccessful attempt to re-colonise Moria.

GIMLI, the son of Glóin (who had been another of Thorin Oakenshield's companions in the Erebor Quest), represented all Dwarves as a member of the Fellowship of the Ring.

ADVENTURERS

Longbeard Dwarves from TA 2942–2994 may come from the Blue Mountains, Erebor, or the Iron Hills. The prosperity of Erebor and Dale offers ample prospect for craftsmen and travelling merchant characters, while the growing dangers on the Easterling frontier—which finally erupt during the War of the Ring—provide opportunities for Dwarf-warriors to prove their worth at Barukkhizdín or along the River Carnen. Dwarves who share the unrest of Balin may accompany him on his doomed expedition to Moria. This would be especially appropriate for Longbeard nobles seeking to recover some lost heirloom in Khazad-dûm. Equally, the mysteries of Moria may fire the imagination of a Dwarf-loremaster.

ATTRIBUTES, SKILLS, AND TRAITS

ADJUSTMENTS: +1 Bearing, +1 Wits

SKILLS: Language: Westron, Lore: History (Durin's folk)

BACKGROUND PACKAGES

DWARF OF BALIN'S COLONY: Armed Combat +2, Lore: Realm (Moria) +1, Stonecraft +2, Survival (Mountains) +1.

DWARF OF THE BLUE MOUNTAINS: Armed Combat +1, Lore: Realm (Blue Mountains) +1, Smithcraft +2, Stonecraft +1, Survival (Mountains) +1.

DWARF OF EREBOR: Appraise +1, Armed Combat +1, Lore: Realm (Erebor) +1, Smithcraft +2, Stonecraft +1.

DWARF OF THE IRON HILLS: Armed Combat +1, Lore: Realm (Iron Hills) +1, Ranged Combat +1, Smithcraft +2, Stonecraft +1.

WANDERING DWARF: Appraise +1, Armed Combat +2, Smithcraft +2, Teamster +1.

ÚRI'S FOLK

'In ancient days [the elves] had had wars with some of the dwarves, whom they accused of stealing their treasure.'
— *The Hobbit*

The kindred of Úri are instantly recognizable by the fiery hue of their beards. Úri's folk take great pride in their beards, weighting them with silver ornaments that clink and chime as they walk, making themselves all the more conspicuous. The weighting of beards is a mark of status among this tribe, and strict rules of precedence and honour are observed in the matter of their comportment. Beardweights denote age, lineage, and deeds of renown, and they can only be bestowed by the king or the eldest living male of a household. Dwarves of Úri's folk whose beards are so weighted suffer a –1 test modifier to Stealth tests per 10 advancements (or fraction thereof) they have.

NATURE

Úri's people have a temper to match their appearance: quick, haughty, and vengeful, all beyond the normal share of these vices apportioned to the Khazâd. At their worst, Úri's folk embody the worst that Dwarves are capable of, as was seen in their murder of Thingol and their war with the Elves of Doriath. When ruled by their passions, they have no need of the Dark Lord's machinations to twist their actions to evil. There are times when Sauron wishes that all Dwarves could be as Úri's kindred.

Yet even the sins of Úri pale by comparison with the deeds perpetrated by the renegades of Sindri and Var's peoples. The latter stood in the ranks of Mordor on the field of Dagorlad or knowingly aided the Dark Lord's cause for their own profit. Self-centred and short-sighted as they can be, Úri's folk have never prostituted their axes to the Lord of the Rings, nor to any friend of the Black Land.

The boastfulness of the Sons of Úri is not empty of content. Their house has produced the greatest blade-smiths in Middle-earth, and their axes have won glory upon many battlefields in defence of the Free Peoples. If they cannot forget their ancient grudge against the Elves, neither can they refuse to fight at their side against the Shadow—if only to prove to the Firstborn how much greater their martial valour is.

LANDS AND LORE

Úri woke from sleep alongside Linnar in the northern reaches of the Blue Mountains, and his descendants have always called that range home. Near to their midmost climes, Úri's folk delved Tumunzahar, the Hollowbold—called by the Elves 'Nogrod'—into the eastern slopes of the Blue Mountains, just south of Gabilgathol, the city of Linnar's people.

In the convulsions of the Great Battle that ended the Elder Days, both Tumunzahar and Gabilgathol were ruined, a catastrophe which many of the survivors interpreted as retribution for their ill deeds in the war against the Elves. Those who were thus dispirited—widows and orphans of the slain for the most part—disowned Úri's heir and joined themselves to Khazad-dûm. Those who remained faithful to their king abandoned the ruins of Nogrod to delve new halls in the south of the Blue Mountains.

The folk of Úri who pledged themselves to Durin II did not thereby renounce their distinctive identity—nor did any Longbeard dare offend them by suggesting that they do so. When, centuries later, Úri's heir followed their example by relocating to Moria, his folk still remained a people apart. Even at the Battle of Azanulbizar, long after the loss of their lord's line, Úri's kindred marched under their own banner.

OUTER SPEECH

In addition to Khuzdul, Úri's folk speak Westron. Because of their fathers' feud with the Elves of Doriath, no Son of Úri speaks or answers to one who speaks Sindarin. For the same reason, they do not inscribe objects with the Runes of Daeron.

OUTER NAMES

Duin, Fuin, Jófi, Káin, Kalin, Kúri, Kurin, Olin, Orin, Réni.

FATHERS OF RENOWN

ÚRI, Father of the Folk, founded their ancestral mansion of Tumunzahar.

TELCHAR, greatest smith of Nogrod, forged the sword Narsil and many other legendary blades during the Wars of Beleriand.

DWARI ruled Úri's folk in the southern Blue Mountains (SA

2012–2113). He received a Ring of Power but was later slain in blood-feud by Linnar's heir. Dwari's son eluded Linnar's vengeance and took refuge with his kinsfolk in Khazad-dûm.

Kúri, lord of Úri's folk under Durin's heir, sacrificed himself and a company of his mightiest warriors to hold the Pass of Nuril-lagil against the onslaught of the Dragon Skell, so that Durin's folk would have time to escape the Grey Mountains with their lives.

Adventurers

The greatest craftsmen of Úri's kindred perished in war with the Elves. Their lore died with them and has never been equalled by their descendants. For this reason, the Sons of Úri have most frequently distinguished themselves as warriors, leaving the less belligerent arts to their Longbeard hosts.

Since the failure of Úri's direct line (c. TA 2600), his people have often attached themselves in a semi-mercenary capacity to individual families among Durin's folk, under whose banner they march in battle—unless a Union of the Khazâd is convoked, in which case they muster as an independent company. Úri's folk alone were disappointed by Thráin's failure to lead a re-conquest of Moria after the Battle of Azanulbizar. Consequently, many 'free axes' from Úri's people joined Balin's re-colonisation attempt—in hopes of fighting Orcs as much as for the glory of regaining the ancient halls of Durin.

Attributes, Skills, and Traits

Adjustments: +1 Strength

Skills: Language: Westron, Lore: History (Úri's folk)

Flaws: Reckless

Background Packages

Dwarf of Balin's Colony: Armed Combat +2, Lore: Realm (Moria) +1, Stonecraft +2, Survival (Mountains) +1.

Dwarf of the Blue Mountains: Armed Combat +2, Lore: Realm (Blue Mountains) +1, Stonecraft +2, Survival (Mountains) +1.

Dwarf of Erebor: Appraise +1, Armed Combat +2, Lore: Realm (Erebor) +1, Stonecraft +2.

Dwarf of the Iron Hills: Armed Combat +2, Lore: Realm (Iron Hills) +1, Ranged Combat +1, Stonecraft +2.

Wandering Dwarf: Appraise +2, Armed Combat +1, Smithcraft +2, Teamster +1.

Linnar's Folk

> *'Each one of his folk was clad in a hauberk of steel mail that hung to his knees, and his legs were covered with hose of a fine and flexible metal mesh, the secret of whose making was possessed by Dain's people.'*
>
> — *The Hobbit*

Dwarves, as a race, tend to be heavily set. This is doubly true for Linnar's folk. The Sons of Linnar take corpulence to new levels, gluttony being their only apparent vice. (Bombur was a Dwarf of Linnar's folk.) This makes them the butt of many Dwarf-jokes, but they take it in stride. They have little reason to fear public disgrace from the other houses, for Linnar's people are the greatest armourers the Dwarves have ever produced.

Nature

Despite their unwieldy girth, the folk of Linnar do not shirk their duties either in peace or in war. No less forward than their fire-bearded neighbours, Linnar's warriors merely advance with slower steps. If they lack Úri's belligerent haste, they make up for it with cool-headed deliberateness—indeed, relentlessness. Linnar's folk have never been routed from the field of battle. If the Khazâd were made immovable in will, Linnar's folk are but the physical embodiment of Dwarf-nature.

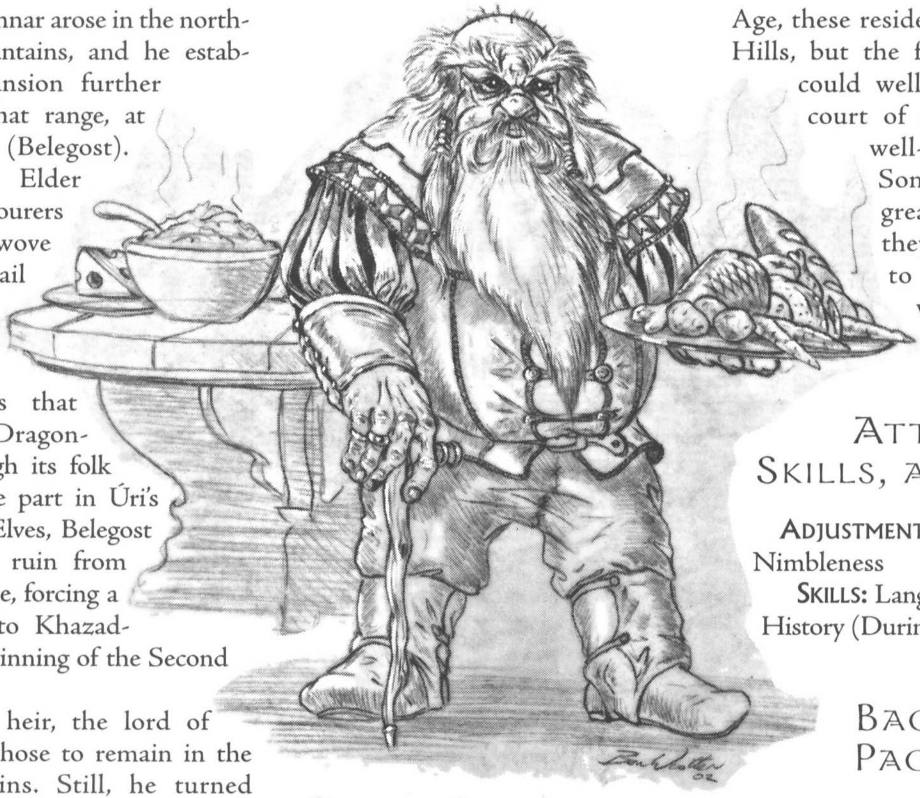
Perhaps it is because of their self-confidence that Linnar's kindred are easygoing in things that sting the pride of other Dwarves and drive them to abandon wisdom. Not that the Sons of Linnar are especially wise. Their confidence comes from their patience, and their patience comes from their skill and devotion to their craft.

LANDS AND LORE

Like Úri, Linnar arose in the northern Blue Mountains, and he established his mansion further south along that range, at Gabilgathol (Belegost). During the Elder Days, the armourers of Belegost wove matchless mail for the Elves of Doriath and forged visored helms that would defy Dragon-fire. But though its folk refused to take part in Úri's war with the Elves, Belegost suffered equal ruin from the Great Battle, forcing a mass exodus to Khazad-dûm at the beginning of the Second Age.

Like Úri's heir, the lord of Linnar's folk chose to remain in the Blue Mountains. Still, he turned north, not south, taking up his abode beneath the mountain where his ancestor had awoken from sleep in ages past. There he dwelt with the remnant of his kindred until one of his descendants, accepting a Ring of Power, led his people east into the Vale of Angmar and established the mines of Barazbizar (Carn Dûm). Linnar's folk inhabited this northern land with great profit until the coming of the Witch-king, who seized Barazbizar by treachery and occupied Angmar with his minions.

So it was that Bór, last heir to Linnar's line, perished in the sack of Barazbizar, and his ring was taken from him. The survivors of his people, leaderless, fled to Khazad-dûm, where they were eventually absorbed into Durin's folk and thereafter followed the fortunes of that people. However, they did not forget the skills of their fathers. In later times, their descendants gathered under the lordship of Dáin in the Iron Hills, where they continued to forge armour equal to that created in ages before.



OUTER SPEECH

As Durin's folk.

OUTER NAMES

As Durin's folk.

FATHERS OF RENOWN

Linnar, Father of the Folk, founded the great mansion of Gabilgathol (Belegost).

Narvi, greatest stonecrafter of Linnar's folk, reforged the West-gates of Moria.

Brúni founded Barazbizar (Carn Dûm) in the Vale of Angmar.

Bór, last lord of Linnar's folk, perished in the Witch-king's sack of Carn Dûm.

ADVENTURERS

Linnar's folk are best known for their craftsmen, specifically their armourers. During the late Third Age, these reside mainly in the Iron Hills, but the fame of their work could well lure one into the court of some distant—and well-paying—lord. The Sons of Linnar are also great warriors, though they are rarely tempted to seek out battle when it can be avoided.

ATTRIBUTES, SKILLS, AND TRAITS

Adjustments: +1 Strength, –1 Nimbleness

Skills: Language: Westron, Lore: History (Durin's folk)

BACKGROUND PACKAGES

Dwarf of Balin's Colony: Armed Combat +2, Lore: Realm (Moria) +1, Smithcraft (Armoursmith) +2, Survival (Mountains) +1.

Dwarf of the Blue Mountains: Armed Combat +1, Lore: Realm (Blue Mountains) +1, Smithcraft (Armoursmith) +2, Stonecraft +1, Survival (Mountains) +1.

Dwarf of Erebor: Appraise +1, Armed Combat +1, Lore: Realm (Erebor) +1, Smithcraft (Armoursmith) +2, Stonecraft +1.

Dwarf of the Iron Hills: Armed Combat +1, Lore: Realm (Iron Hills) +1, Ranged Combat +1, Smithcraft (Armoursmith) +2, Stonecraft +1.

Wandering Dwarf: Appraise +1, Armed Combat +2, Smithcraft (Armoursmith) +2, Teamster +1.

SINDRI'S FOLK

"I am tired of poverty
and the scorn of Men."
— *Thrór, The Return of the King*

In build and bearding, the Dwarves of Sindri's house closely resemble their northern cousins beyond the Frozen Sea: tall (for Dwarves), gaunt, and grey. Depending on where their itinerant wanderings carry them, they may don the indistinct garb of the travelling tinker, or the ritual paraphernalia of the wizened shaman. In the former guise, they have earned from their western kindred the unwelcome appellation of 'Gutter-dwarves.' In the latter, they command the fear and respect of the wild Easterlings. Both postures help them mask a past they would rather forget.

NATURE

Uncorrupted, the heart of a Dwarf delights in things that are made for the sake of their own beauty, or for the bonds of friendship. Of course, in the real world, art must often give way to commerce. Yet most of the Khazâd have always been particular about whom they choose to traffic with: Elves and Northmen and other Free Folk. It is not so with Sindri's people, whose trading partners have most often been servants of the Enemy, even the Dark Lord himself.

Exile and dispersion have deepened the cynicism of the Sons of Sindri, but its roots reach all the way back into the Elder Days, when the delvings of Sindri's folk lay astride the great westward migration routes of Men. Had the Fathers of the Edain settled this region instead of the Easterlings, the Dwarves might have been less inclined to have dealings with the latter. As it happened, however, the Spine of Arda—the great central mountain chain of Middle-earth in which Sindri's folk dwell—came to stand in the very midst of those eastern lands peopled by Men of the Shadow. Unwilling to desert their ancestral delvings in the wake of these newcomers, the Dwarves became their neighbours.

Relations with the Easterlings never approached 'friendship' in any meaningful sense. On the contrary, the first contacts with them were hostile rather than cordial. The Dwarves controlled all of the ways by which the Swarthy Men sought passage across the mountains, and though inferior in numbers, the Khazâd possessed the secret of steel and had been warwise for more than three thousand years of Men. The rude weapons of the Easterlings were as children's toys before the fell axes of the Dwarves, and it soon dawned upon the Mannish invaders that they must either make peace with the Barkashad (as they named the Dwarves, rendering the feared battle-cry of the Dwarves—'Baruk Khazâd'—into their own barbarous tongue) or abandon their westward march.

Mutual toleration and exchange of desired goods followed—much as would later emerge in Rhovanion between the Northmen and the Longbeards, but maintained by fear and threat, rather than friendship and affection. Though occasionally interrupted by violence, this tradition remained essentially unchanged for two millennia, until Sauron began to assert his dominion over Middle-earth during the Dark Years of the Second Age.

So inured had Sindri's folk grown to acting purely out of self-interest, and sustained by no other principle than martial prowess, that they felt no shame in accepting gold from Mordor in payment for arming its minions to make war upon the Westlands. 'Business is business,' and such association with the Lord of Barad-dûr only increased the awe in which most Easterlings held the Barkashad. Of all the houses of the Dwarves, Sindri's was the only one for which Sauron needed no cloak of secrecy to ensnare its king with a Ring of Power.

It was only when both Sauron and Durin's heir each summoned the Khazâd to fight on the field of Dagorlad that Sindri's folk experienced something approaching a crisis of conscience. Even then, it was not abstract ideals that pulled their minds this way and that, but rather the concrete claim upon their loyalty the line of Durin exercised, weighed against the command of their own king. In the end, few were willing to take the field against Durin's heir. Fewer still could conceive of alliance against Sauron as a matter of common honour to the Khazâd, so most of Sindri's folk remained aloof from the war. But their king and many of his warriors fought for Sauron.

In the aftermath of the Last Alliance, the Dwarves of the Westlands universally branded Sindri's folk as renegades and turncoats. The cataclysm of Númenor's downfall had ruined their chief city, and the exile of their king had left them leaderless. They continued to inhabit their ancestral mountains, but under meaner circumstances. Not only they themselves, but also their chief food-providers, the Easterlings, had been greatly weakened as a consequence of the war. Centuries passed before either people could recover even a shadow of its former power or wealth.

The Dragon Wars of the mid-Third Age put a decisive end to the unity of Sindri's folk. The winged worms occupied the Spine of Arda and drove out the remainder of its Dwarvish inhabitants, scattering Sindri's folk across Middle-earth. As they found themselves shunned or at best ignored by the western kindreds, the Sons of Sindri settled, for the most part, among the Easterling tribes. Only by continuing to dwell among the enemies of the West do the Barkashad have any hope of a stable existence.

LANDS AND LORE

In spite of the Fourth and Fifth Unions of the Khazâd, the homeland of Sindri's folk, the Spine of Arda, has remained uninhabitable for the past thirteen centuries due to its infestation by Dragons. The Sons of Sindri have failed to establish any new cities or great delvings. Instead, each household dwells alone from the others. Thus dispersed across the steppelands of Rhûn, the Barkashad eke out a meagre livelihood smelting weapons and performing divination on behalf of the Easterlings.

The latter art, known to its practitioners as 'earth-reading,' was first devised by Sindri's heir, Darsha, soon after he acquired a Ring of Power. Darsha utilised his ring to improve the ores used in blade-forging too. In so doing, he perceived that every metal was imbued with arcane propensities that might be unlocked or transformed for purposes of enchantment. In time, this insight was extended to the study of other substances, until a full-blown alchemical tradition emerged among the Dwarves of Gamil-nâla.

After the Dragon Wars and the ruin of their ancient delvings, those of Sindri's folk who preserved this esoteric knowledge began to adapt it to the needs of a more prosaic existence. Dwarf-earth-readers employed—or at least claimed to employ—the mystical properties of certain gemstones for divinatory and protective purposes: predicting the weather, locating water for herds, diagnosing (and perhaps curing) illnesses, fortune-telling, determining innocence or guilt, warding off evil, etc.

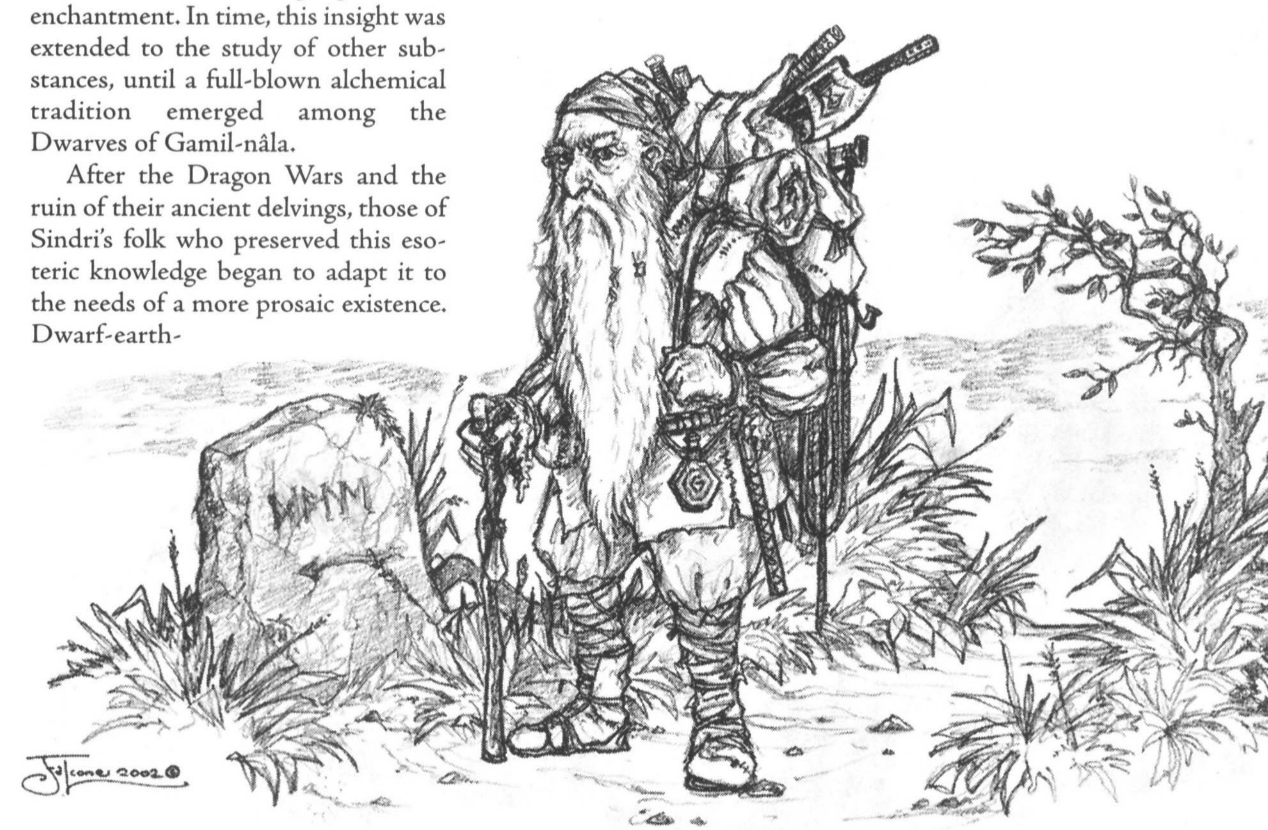
In essence, the Barkashad function as shamans to the Easterling tribes, who view the Dwarves (as they always have) with a certain degree of superstitious awe. For their part, Sindri's folk are eager to foster this aura—and not always by honest means. A good deal of charlatanry undoubtedly passes for Barkashad mysticism among the credulous Easterlings. Yet in one supernatural power the Sons of Sindri cannot be exposed as frauds. Over the ages, the Dwarves have wisely kept the secret of steel to themselves, so that their hosts must always depend upon them.

OUTER SPEECH

Just as the Dwarf-kindreds of the Westlands have adopted the Common Speech as their primary language of intercourse, so do Sindri's folk speak in and take their outer names from the Easterling tongues. As the Easterlings are not one people but many, each tribe or confederacy uses its own language. However, as these languages are akin to one another—and are, moreover, often influenced in their ancient origins to a greater or lesser degree by Khuzdul itself—Sindri's folk are able to comprehend the general purport of what is spoken in these tongues, even when they are unfamiliar with its particular form.

OUTER NAMES

Ashar, Barak, Bukhor, Gord, Khorra, Naj, Narkad, Utal.



FATHERS OF RENOWN

SINDRI, Father of the Folk, founded Gamil-nâla beneath Mount Bundushar.

DARSHA received a Ring of Power and discovered the art of earth-reading.

BULDIN, Sindri's heir, was disowned by most of his people for siding with Sauron at Dagorlad. He founded the mansion of Nurunkhizdín in the mountains beside the Inland Sea, and he escaped there with his followers after the Last Alliance. His fate and the fate of his ring are unknown.

ADVENTURERS

Because of their position in Easterling society, craftsmen are more prominent among Sindri's folk during the late Third Age than warriors. Earth-readers are an elite order. Because of the stigma attached to their house in the Westlands, Sindri's folk rarely venture far from the steppes of Rhûn. Nevertheless, it is always possible that a Son of Sindri may find a niche for himself in a more urbanized setting not exclusively Dwarf in population, like Dale or Minas Tirith.

ATTRIBUTES, SKILLS, AND TRAITS

SKILLS: Language: Easterling, Lore: History (Sindri's folk), Lore: History (Easterling)

BACKGROUND PACKAGES

ITINERANT CRAFTSMAN: Appraise +1, Craft: Gemcutting +2, Guise +1, Lore: Alchemy +1, Lore: Realm (Rhûn) +1.

EARTH-READER ELITE ORDER

Earth-readers are renowned throughout Rhûn and beyond as mystics of great power. In reality, they are mostly charlatans posing as Dwarves blessed with uncanny knowledge of the earth. Still, there is some truth to their claims, and not all of the earth-readers are bereft of the skills they profess to have.

ADVENTURES

An earth-reader is handy to have along when a company finds itself wandering through Rhûn or in the mines delved beneath many of Middle-earth's mountain ranges. Most earth-readers are ready to hire out their services to just about anyone—as long as the price is right.

BACKGROUND

Many craftsmen of Sindri's folk are versed in the lore of earth-reading. They understand the mystical properties of the substances of Arda. To access and exploit these properties, the craftsman must apprentice himself to a skilled earth-reader willing to take him on for a training period of at least a year.

GAME INFORMATION

REQUISITES

To become an earth-reader, the character must have Craft: Gemcutting 6+, Lore: Alchemy 6+, Perception 8+, Wits 8+, and the ability to cast spells. Most earth-readers are Dwarves of Sindri's line, although it's possible for an outsider to be trained in the ways of earth-reading—for a hefty sum.

ORDER SKILLS

The earth-reader's order skills are: Appraise (Wit), Craft (Nim), Insight (Per), Legerdemain (Nim), Lore (Wit), Observe (Per), Persuade (Brg), Smithcraft (Str), Stonecraft (Str), and Weather-sense (Per).

ABILITIES

The order abilities described hereafter are available to earth-reader characters:

UNLOCK GEM: Earth-readers skilled in this ability can unlock the inherent magical properties of gemstones, which gives them access to powers equivalent to those given by various edges.

First, the earth-reader must make a TN 15 Craft: Gemcutting test on a given stone to access its magical properties. If successful, the Narrator then defines the stone's abilities in terms of the edge it grants. The table (right) gives examples, but the Narrator is free to assign the effects of other edges, even in contradiction to the table to reflect (for example) the subtle magic of the location from which the

EARTH-READER (CONTINUED)

gem was quarried. In any case, once unlocked, the gem is magical and thus can be detected with *Sense Power* and the like.

Once a stone's properties have been unlocked, the earth-reader may use it by holding it in either hand and making a TN 15 Lore: Alchemy test. If successful, the effects of the edge are continuous and the stone works as long as it (and nothing else) is held in that hand. Thus, it is possible to have a maximum of two stones active at once—one in each hand. Note that while the hand holding a gem must be bare (that is, ungloved), it is possible to hold a stone in a hand to which a shield has been strapped.

An earth-reader who holds identical stones in each hand gains the benefits of a second pick's improvement. For example, an earth-reader holding an unlocked opal in each hand gains the benefits of Night-eyed 2. For edges with no improvement effects, however, such as Eloquent, a second stone with the same power is simply redundant.

The powers of stones do not offer the advantages of improvement picks to characters who already have possess the edge in question. Instead, the higher level of either the stones' or character's innate abilities prevails.

Individuals other than the earth-reader who unlocked a given stone can use its properties, and use them in the same way the earth-reader would, but their Lore: Alchemy tests are made against TN 20, which makes success at doing so uncommon.

GIFT GEM: The earth-reader may bestow the effects of an unlocked stone's power upon someone else. The earth-reader makes a TN 15 Lore: Alchemy test to activate the power and places the stone in the hand of another. It continues to function for that individual as long as it (and nothing else) is held in that hand. If taken by someone else, the stone ceases to function.

GEM POWERS

GEM	TRAIT GRANTED
Amethyst	Honey-tongued
Diamond	Honour's Insight
Emerald	Eloquent
Garnet	Warrior's Heart
Ruby	Lion-hearted
Sapphire	Furtive
Opal	Night-eyed

THULIN'S FOLK

> *'[T]here were dragons in the wastes beyond; and after many years they became strong again and multiplied, and they made war on the Dwarves and plundered their works.'*
>
> — *The Return of the King*

It is said among the Khazâd that Thulin's folk dwell so far north that their beards grow stiff from the cold. The tale may be apocryphal, but the severity of the arctic climes in which the Sons of Thulin make their home can hardly be exaggerated. These Dwarves tread the uttermost North of Middle-earth, clad in the furs of beasts, wearing little or no metal, which burns the skin when so chill. For the most part, their ornaments are carved from wood or bone, bound with sinew. Taller than most Dwarves and slighter of build, Thulin's folk are well adapted to trudging across snow-drifts or weaving through tangled taiga in pursuit of prey. (Of necessity, Thulin's people, alone of the Seven Houses, procure their own food.) Their beards are wispy and grey, their skin pale as bone and tough as hide.

NATURE

More than for any other kindred of the Khazâd, the life of Thulin's folk has been irrevocably changed by the Dragon Wars. Dwelling as they do amid the tortured wreckage of Morgoth's ancient realm—the very breeding place of Dragons—the re-awakening of the worms during the mid-Third Age left Thulin's tribe broken and scattered beyond hope of recovery. Yet unlike their more southerly cousins, the Sons of Thulin obstinately refused to abandon their ancestral lands.

Kibil-tarag, their chief delving, has become inextricably infested with the worms. Instead of resorting to a futile crusade to recover it by force, the survivors of Thulin's house altered their tactics to match the nature of their foe. Taking to a life of solitary wandering, the Sons of Thulin became 'dragonslayers,' stalking the icy wastes with stealth and ambush, with cunning and craft, waylaying the worms wherever they might find them. The hunted have become the hunter, and the Dragons do not like it.

So bent are the dragonslayers upon their quest that few of Thulin's folk are ever found sojourning in lands further south, unless it be in pursuit of a worm they have named for death, or to join a Union of the Khazâd. Forodwaith is their home, and though they are always ready to lend aid to a Dwarf who may wander onto the tundra, the Sons of Thulin display closer fellowship to the Lossoth of Forochel than to the Seven Houses.

LANDS AND LORE

Thulin's folk inhabit Forodwaith, the Northern Waste of Middle-earth, which forms the rim of Arda's arctic circle. Here once lay the frozen realm of Morgoth, and the colds of that desolation still overshadow its lands like the breath of Death. As though in defiance, the Free Peoples have nevertheless colonised its mountains and tundra, its forests and coasts, and there they eke out a precarious livelihood upon the edge of the world.

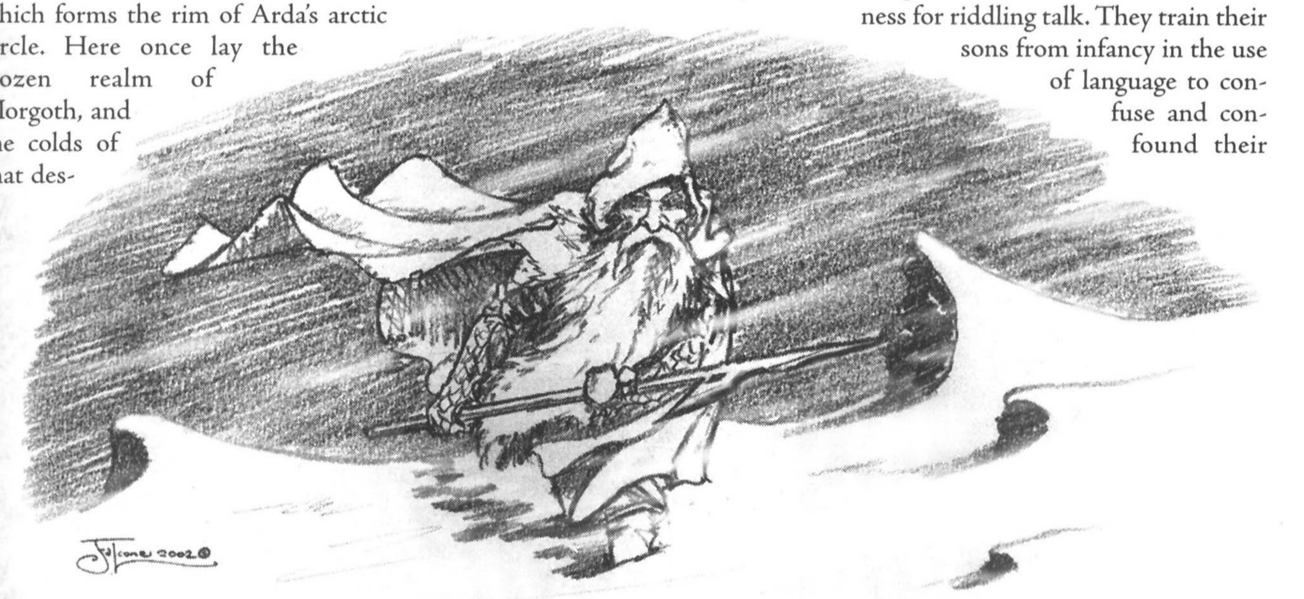
Thulin's people first established themselves in this inhospitable wilderness beneath the icy peak of Kibil-tarag, where they made their dwelling in the days of their strength. Even after the promontory on which this mountain rose was sundered from Middle-earth, the Dwarves stubbornly persisted. Only with the invasion of the Dragons were they forced to flee.

The survivors went this way and that, seeking more modest hearths that could escape the malice—or at least the notice—of the worms. Each household delved its own hearth, where its people lived out a stoic existence of hunting and weapon-crafting, occasionally bartering with neighbouring Lossoth for needed goods. Within such dwellings, the Sons of Thulin stayed until the longing for dragonslaying overtook them.

A dragonslayer of Thulin's folk hunts alone, forsaking wife and children, as one who has already tasted death. It is therefore a law among Thulin's people that no Dwarf may undertake the Slayer's Oath until he has both begotten a son to carry on his name and reared his offspring to the age of manhood, so that thereafter his wife and other children can be provided for in his absence. Only if tragedy befalls a household, and all close kin have perished by violence or mishap, is a Son of Thulin permitted to embark upon the Slayer's path sooner.

The dragonslayers of the North have devised many weapons baneful to the long-worms. Chief among these is the spear that gives their occupation its name. The Sons of Thulin patiently carve these thorns from Dragon-bone and lay upon them spells of slaying and unbreakability. A Dwarf who has slain one drake armours himself with the hide of that kill and so gains invulnerability to worm-fire. A Dragon's hide is reckoned as proof of a Slayer's deeds, and it would be a grave offence for another—even his own son—to don it for any cause.

The greatest weapon of a dragonslayer is his own voice. The Sons of Thulin are wise in the ways of Dragons and know the worms' weakness for riddling talk. They train their sons from infancy in the use of language to confuse and confound their



enemy—and to avoid being bemused themselves. Many a drake has been set off his guard while entranced by the clever riddles and cunning verse of a Slayer's deadly minstrelsy.

Outer Speech

There are few outsiders apart from the Lossoth with whom to hold converse in the Far North, and for that reason Thulin's folk have become fluent in the Lossothren tongue. The Slayers also use this flowing, melodic speech in dealing with Dragons. When a worm asks for their right name, the Slayer wisely deflects the question with a string of colourful sobriquets, usually won from the Lossoth.

The Dwarves of Forodwaith do not know a proper runic script, as do the Khazâd of the Westlands. They have, however, from time immemorial employed a system of pictographs they call *felakmêk*. For more information about these signs, see page 31.

Outer Names

Thulin's folk do not *take* outer names. Instead, they are given names by the Lossoth. These names tend to be generic rather than personal, but since a Lossothren tribe rarely has contact with more than one Dwarf at a time, identities are never confused. Typical 'Dwarf-names' include Laulumistaja (Song-maker), Parrakas (Bearded One), and Surmataja (Slayer).

Fathers of Renown

Thulin (Vanha Isä), Father of the Folk, founded Kibil-tarag and devised *felakmêk*.

Riimukäsi, the king who accepted a Ring of Power.

Dragonslayer Elite Order

Dragonslayers are strong and determined hunters who have dedicated their lives to the pursuit of the greatest of prey: the Dragons of Middle-earth. They live alone from the rest of their kin, ever searching for a new Dragon to carve up into their latest trophy. Most dragonslayers have short, unremarkable careers that end in quick yet painful deaths. Those who survive are the stuff of legends.

Adventures

Dragonslayers are perfect for adventuring. If they have yet to find themselves a Dragon to name as their next prey, they are willing to wander far and wide until they do. No matter what, however, they never forget their true calling: to rid the world of Dragon-kind. All else is secondary to this demand.

Background

The mystical abilities of a dragonslayer derive from his knowledge of the secret names of the *riimut* (*felakmêk*). For every rank of Language: *Felakmêk* above 5, the Dwarf is eligible for one of the special abilities of his order.

Game Information

Requisites

To become a dragonslayer, the hero must have Armed Combat 5+, Craft: Carving 6+, Games: Riddles 6+, Language: *Felakmêk* 6+, Perform: Sing 6+, Stealth 5+, Survival (Arctic) 7+, Track 7+, and the ability to cast spells.

Order Skills

The dragonslayer's order skills are: Armed Combat (Nim), Craft (Nim), Games (Nim), Language (Wit), Insight (Per), Perform (Brg), Stealth (Nim), Survival (Per), Track (Wits), Weather-sense (Per).

Abilities

The order abilities described hereafter are available to dragonslayer characters. A dragonslayer can never have more dragonslayer order abilities than he has ranks of Language: *Felakmêk* above 5.

Bemuse: While engaged in riddling or singing, the dragonslayer gains the equivalent of *Voice of Suasion*—as an ability—and the Strong-willed edge.

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DRAGONSLAYER (CONTINUED)

CARVE DRAGONSLAYER SPEAR: A dragonslayer who defeats a dragon can carve a mighty dragonslayer spear from one of its bones. The carving process takes several days and requires a successful TN 15 Craft: Carving test. Once created, the spear is imbued with effects identical to those described on page 30. If the spear is ever destroyed—a difficult feat, but not impossible—the dragonslayer can carve a new one, either out of the bones of a dragon already defeated or from the carcass of a newly-slain creature. (A single dragon carcass contains enough raw materials for an effectively infinite quantity of such spears.)

Improvement: Each additional pick devoted to this ability allows the dragonslayer to have one additional spear in active use.

TOOL DRAGON-FELL: A dragonslayer who defeats a dragon can tool powerful armour from its remains. This process requires several weeks and requires a successful TN 15 Smithcraft (Armoursmith) test. Once finished, the armour has effects identical to those described on page 29. If the armour is ever destroyed the dragonslayer can tool a new set, either out of the carcass of a dragon already defeated or from the hide of a newly-slain creature.

Improvement: Each additional pick devoted to this ability allows the dragonslayer to have one additional set of armour in active use.

JÄÄSILMÄ, last king of Thulin's folk, who was devoured with his ring by a Dragon in the defence of Kibil-tarag.

SURMATAJA, the first to take the Slayer's Oath, is said to have been the bane of twelve worms.

ADVENTURERS

The harsh demands of their existence require most Dwarves of Thulin's folk to begin their careers in the barbarian order. Dragonslayers are an elite order. A chronicle set in the Northern Waste provides ample opportunity for a Dwarf of this kindred. Becoming involved in a chronicle set elsewhere in Middle-earth requires a strong motive for the character to leave his homeland. A Dragon-hunt offers a ready pretext, but if that worm is slain, a more sustainable rationale must be found. Perhaps, in the course of adventuring, the Dwarf may become oath-bound to another character or quest that necessitates his presence in the south.

ATTRIBUTES, SKILLS, AND TRAITS

ADJUSTMENTS: +1 Nimbleness, +1 Vitality

SKILLS: Language: Lossothren, Language: *Felakmêk,* Lore: History (Thulin's folk)

EDGES: Lossoth-friend (identical to Elf-friend, but applies to the Lossoth)

FLAWS: Enemy (a Dragon), Oath

BACKGROUND PACKAGES

DWARF OF THULIN'S FOLK: Craft: Carving +2, Games: Riddles +1, Lore: Realm (Forodwaith) +1, Ranged Combat +1, Survival (Arctic) +1.

VAR'S FOLK

> *'[Dwarves] are not evil by nature, and few ever served the Enemy of free will, whatever the tales of Men may have alleged.'*
> — *The Return of the King*

The Sons of Var are dark and brooding, not only in mood but also in appearance. Dwarves of Var's kindred are readily distinguished by the hue of their beards: black as coal and thick as wire, often left tangled and unkempt, as if the Dwarves are in a state of perpetual mourning. The folk of Var have much to lament.

NATURE

Var's folk are one of the two houses of the Khazâd whose history has been tainted by dealings with the Enemy. (The other is Sindri's folk. See pages 18–20.) But the cause of Var's failing was different from that of Sindri. While the latter kindred erred for lack of shame, the ways of the former have been twisted by an excess of it. More sensitive than other Dwarves to injuries to its collective honour, the House of Var allowed its implacable feud with Vigdís's people to tempt it into alliance with the Dark Lord.

This was, to be sure, a crime of the distant past. Since the Dragon Wars of the mid-Third Age, the Sons of Var and Vigdís have been reconciled—at least in word—and never again should the axes of Nargubraz take the field against an Heir of Durin. Nevertheless, the stigma of their past deeds continues to haunt them.

During the long centuries of Sauron's hiding, the burden of this evil slumbered, but with the Dark Lord's reappearance in the East during the Watchful Peace (TA 2063–2460), a doom of choice was laid before them. As erstwhile allies of Mordor, Sauron—in the guise of the Necromancer—demanded of Var's folk Nargubraz as a place of refuge. Acquiescence would be rewarded. Refusal would meet with punishment.

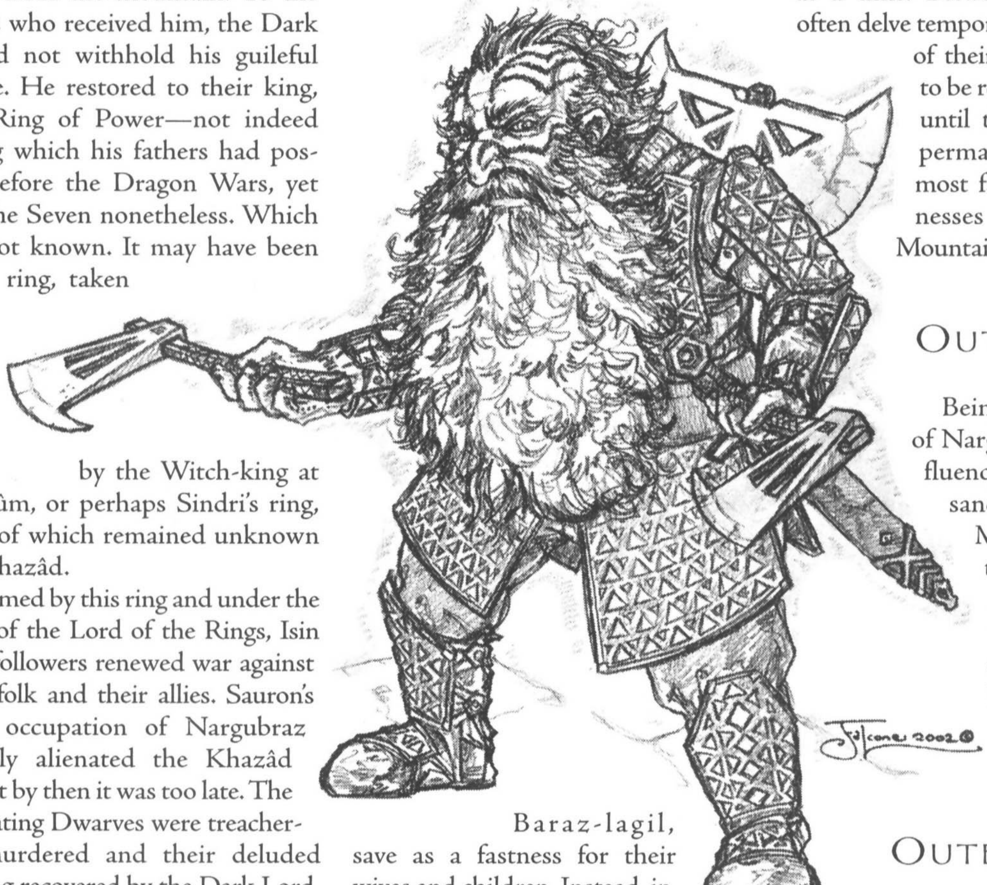
This ultimatum divided the Dwarves, as Sauron knew it would, and soon blood was spilt in the halls of Nargubraz. The Refusers (those who opposed admitting Sauron) were expelled from the mountain. To the Dwarves who received him, the Dark Lord did not withhold his guileful gratitude. He restored to their king, Isin, a Ring of Power—not indeed that ring which his fathers had possessed before the Dragon Wars, yet one of the Seven nonetheless. Which one is not known. It may have been Linnar's ring, taken by the Witch-king at Carn Dûm, or perhaps Sindri's ring, the fate of which remained unknown to the Khazâd.

Enflamed by this ring and under the shadow of the Lord of the Rings, Isin and his followers renewed war against Vigdis's folk and their allies. Sauron's lengthy occupation of Nargubraz eventually alienated the Khazâd there, but by then it was too late. The collaborating Dwarves were treacherously murdered and their deluded king's ring recovered by the Dark Lord, it having served its purpose. After four centuries, Sauron was himself driven out by the Refusers, aided by the surviving Sons of Vigdís and Saruman the White. Nargubraz was retaken.

But the Refusers would not abide there. 'Not until the works of the Deceiver are ended, his servants slain, his shadow brought to naught,' they swore, 'shall we deem these halls cleansed of the evils of our House. Not until that day shall we return to Nargubraz.' So it is that Var's folk thereafter donned a visage of shame and penitence and made war upon the friends of Mordor with greater vigour than any of the rest of the Khazâd of the late Third Age.

LANDS AND LORE

Despite their renewed alliance with Vigdis's people, the Sons of Var do not avail themselves of the comforts of Baraz-lagil, save as a fastness for their wives and children. Instead, in pursuit of their redemption they have taken to a life of wandering, not as the solitary dragonslayers of Thulin's kindred, but in armed companies, geared for war. Throughout the lands of the East and even the deserts of the South, the 'Axes of Nargubraz'—as they are known—wage war against the dominion of Mordor.



But they do not fight for free. Even in vengeance, the Dwarves are a pragmatic people, never letting slip an opportunity for enrichment. Wealth remains the basis of honour among the Seven Houses, and wealth won in battle against the Enemy is all the more glorious. The Sons of Var do not squander their gold needlessly. The wages of their grim labours are periodically conveyed back to vaults in Baraz-lagil.

The mercenary peregrinations of Var's kindred sometime require several years of absence from their homeland at a time. Between campaigns, they often delve temporary halls in the lands of their service. These tend to be re-occupied over time, until they acquire a semi-permanent status. The most famous of these fastnesses is Naragul in the Mountains of the Far South.

OUTER SPEECH

Being itinerant, the Axes of Nargubraz tend towards fluency (or at least conversance) with whichever Mannish tongues their employers speak. As such, their outer names are taken in the Easterling or Southron tongues.

OUTER NAMES

These vary widely, depending on locale. If any of the Sons of Var wandered into the Westlands they would adopt names of that region. Use names from the lists given for the other kindreds as appropriate.

FATHERS OF RENOWN

VAR (Sadal), Father of the Folk, delved Nargubraz.

ISIN received Sauron into Nargubraz in TA 2063 and resumed the feud with Vigdis's folk.

ADVENTURERS

Due to the demands of their oath, the Sons of Var are invariably warriors, the skills of other orders being provided by Vigdis's people. The Axes of Nargubraz tend to shy away from the Westlands because of their association with the shame of Dagorlad. There is war aplenty in the East and South in any case. For this reason, Var's folk are the Dwarf-kindred best suited to chronicles set in southern Middle-earth.

ATTRIBUTES, SKILLS, AND TRAITS

SKILLS: Language: Easterling, Language: Southron, Lore: History (Var's folk)

FLAWS: Oath

BACKGROUND PACKAGES

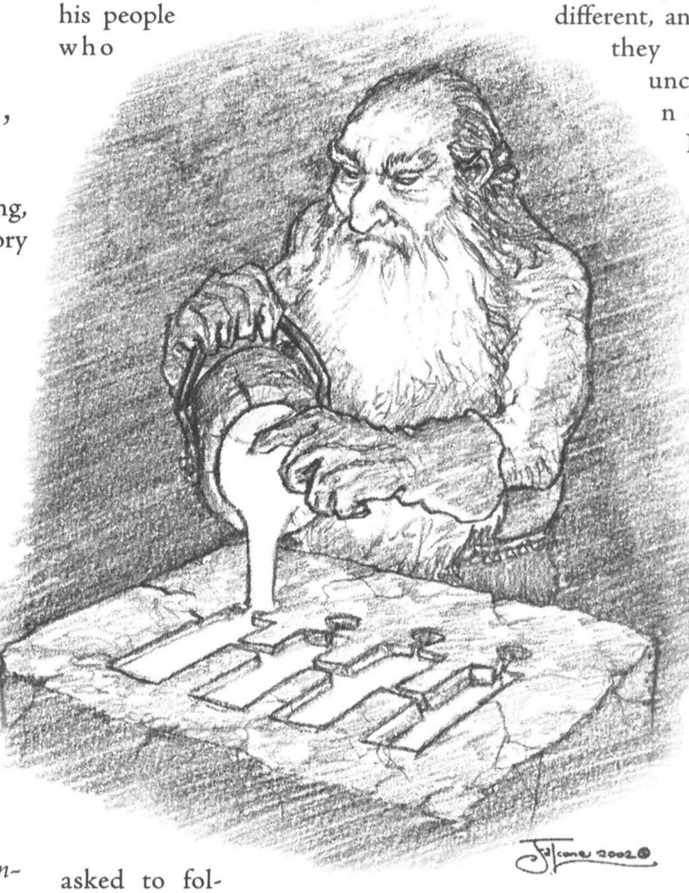
AXE OF NARGUBRAZ: Armed Combat +2, Lore: Realm (East of East) +1, Stonecraft +2, Survival +1.

VIGDÍS'S FOLK

'Frodo met strange dwarves of far countries, seeking refuge in the West.'
— *The Fellowship of the Ring*

The peoples of the East refer to Vigdís's folk as 'Red Dwarves,' an appellation alluding to their penchant for staining their skin and beards with a pigment extracted from the red stone that abounds in their mountainous homeland. As the origin of this custom is a well-kept secret, it has given rise to much unfounded speculation by Men and Elves, such as the belief that Dwarves are born from stone or that they eat rock for food. The Sons of Vigdís humour such idle fancy, preferring to remain enigmatic and mysterious.

NATURE



It is said among the Khazâd that Vigdís was the only Dwarf-father to have refused leave to any of his people who asked to follow the Deathless. The tale may well be true, for though they took part in the Bonds of Blood, Vigdis's folk have always been introverted, not eager to interact with other kindreds. For their unyielding character, other Dwarves have named them stone-footed and iron-hearted.

Vigdís's people are neither belligerent nor mean-spirited. They are fell in battle, as are all Dwarves, but their preference is always for defence of their delving rather than aggressive forays. The latter they have practiced only in defence of their Elf-allies and in their long-standing—and, happily, long since extinguished—feud with Var's kindred.

Dark-elves have wandered the woodlands that march upon the flanks of the Mountains of the East since before the Dwarves awoke. Together with Vigdís's folk they have staved off the Shadow, but no great friendship or traffic has ever arisen between their peoples. Their ways are different, and for the most part they have remained unchanged by their neighbours. Nevertheless, ties with an Elf-kindred—albeit a Dark-elf folk—have curbed the excesses of Dwarf-nature among Vigdís's people, to which their utter rejection of Sauron (in contrast to Var's chequered past) is testimony.

LANDS AND LORE

Immovable in spirit, the Sons of Vigdís have been equally constant in their possession of the Pass of Baraz-lagil, which gives their chief dwelling its name. In the glory days of their folk, the Red Dwarves founded colonies throughout the Mountains of the East, but these holds were all lost or abandoned during the Dragon Wars. No worm has ever conquered Baraz-lagil, due to the ingenious defences Vigdis's folk contrived with the aid of the White Wizard.

FEMALE DWARVES

Among the Dwarves, there are few Dwarf-women—no more than three in ten. Because they are so few, females are the more prized by the Dwarf-race, so they rarely leave their homes and delvings. When they are seen abroad, their appearance is so much like that of male Dwarves that they are rarely recognised for what they are. All of this has given rise to rumours among Men that there are no Dwarf-women, that Dwarves instead spring from holes in the ground or grow out of stone. While false, these rumours are persistent.

The White Wizard, of course, is Curunír (Saruman), who spent the better part of the Third Age wandering the East of Middle-earth before finally returning to the Westlands. In the folk of Vigdís, the Wizard found a people after his own—not yet corrupted—heart. As evil imperceptibly spread its hand across Middle-earth, he strove to turn the Dwarves' stronghold into a bulwark for the foes of the Shadow. Curunír first came among the Sons of Vigdís during the Dragon Wars and helped them devise a blasting fire to foil the worms, an invention he would later turn to wicked purposes of his own.

It was Curunír who also helped make peace between the feuding Dwarves, though he never won the love of Var's folk until the expulsion of Sauron from Nargubraz, which became the Wizard's great labour in the East. Although Sauron's true identity was not yet perceived, the capacity of this Necromancer to wreak havoc on the Dwarves and other eastern peoples was what ultimately prompted Curunír to form the White Council in TA 2463. Since the Wizard's departure, Vigdís's folk have continued as they always have, maintaining their place in the world and supporting Var's people.

OUTER SPEECH

Though Vigdís's folk can speak the Dark-elf tongue of their neighbours, they do not take outer names in it. Rather they adopt the names of the Mountain-folk who trade with them and make seasonal use of the Pass of Baraz-lagil to shepherd their flocks. Due to the powerful alliance of Free Peoples represented by the Elves and Red Dwarves, these herdsmen have never fallen under Sauron's dominion, much like the Northmen of Rhovanion.

OUTER NAMES

Arsin, Bikhla, Danu, Dirniz, Khetan, Khidiz, Nemuz, Razin, Zar.

FATHERS OF RENOWN

VIGDÍS (Malin), Father of the Folk, founded Baraz-lagil and befriended the Dark-elves.

ADVENTURERS

Ever since the expulsion of Sauron from the East, Vigdís's folk have left most of their fighting to the Axes of Nargubraz. This has enabled the Red Dwarves to concentrate on honing their craftsmen skills. In recent years, the White Wizard has re-established contact with his former allies in the Mountains of the East, requesting from them various substances for the surer defence of the Westlands against Mordor—at least, that is the alleged reason. This traffic is perilous, however, due to the Dark Lord's control over so much of the East. Consequently, Vigdís's folk rarely embark on such a journey unless they are strengthened by a company of Var's warriors. (This is one way of getting Dwarves of both eastern kindreds into a chronicle set in the Westlands.)

ATTRIBUTES, SKILLS, AND TRAITS

SKILLS: Language: Dark-elf, Language: Mountain-folk, Lore: History (Vigdis's folk)

BACKGROUND PACKAGES

CRAFTSMAN OF BARAZ-LAGIL: Armed Combat +1, Craft: Incendiaries +1, Lore: Realm (East of East) +1, Smithcraft +2, Stonecraft +1.

Chapter Three

THE FORGE'S FIRE

'They shaped and wrought,
and light they caught
To hide in gems on hilt of sword.'
— The Hobbit

Dwarves are chiefly known by the work of their hands, be it arms or armour, inscriptions in stone or tracery on steel, the cut gem, or the cunning device. Several such items have already been alluded to in the previous chapter. Now it's time for a more in-depth look at the achievements of the Khazâd.

* * *

ANGERTHAS

Often erroneously referred to as 'Dwarf-letters' because of their frequent use by the Khazâd, the Cirth—or, in their more developed form, Angerthas—are in reality an Elvish invention. Though accounts vary as to the exact lineage of their transmission, all agree that the Grey-elf Daeron of Doriath was the ultimate source of the forms that came to the Dwarves. Úri and Linnar's kindreds seem to have employed their own versions of this runic alphabet, but as these houses either died out or merged with Durin's folk, it was the Longbeards whose tradition of rune-carving eventually gained dominance.

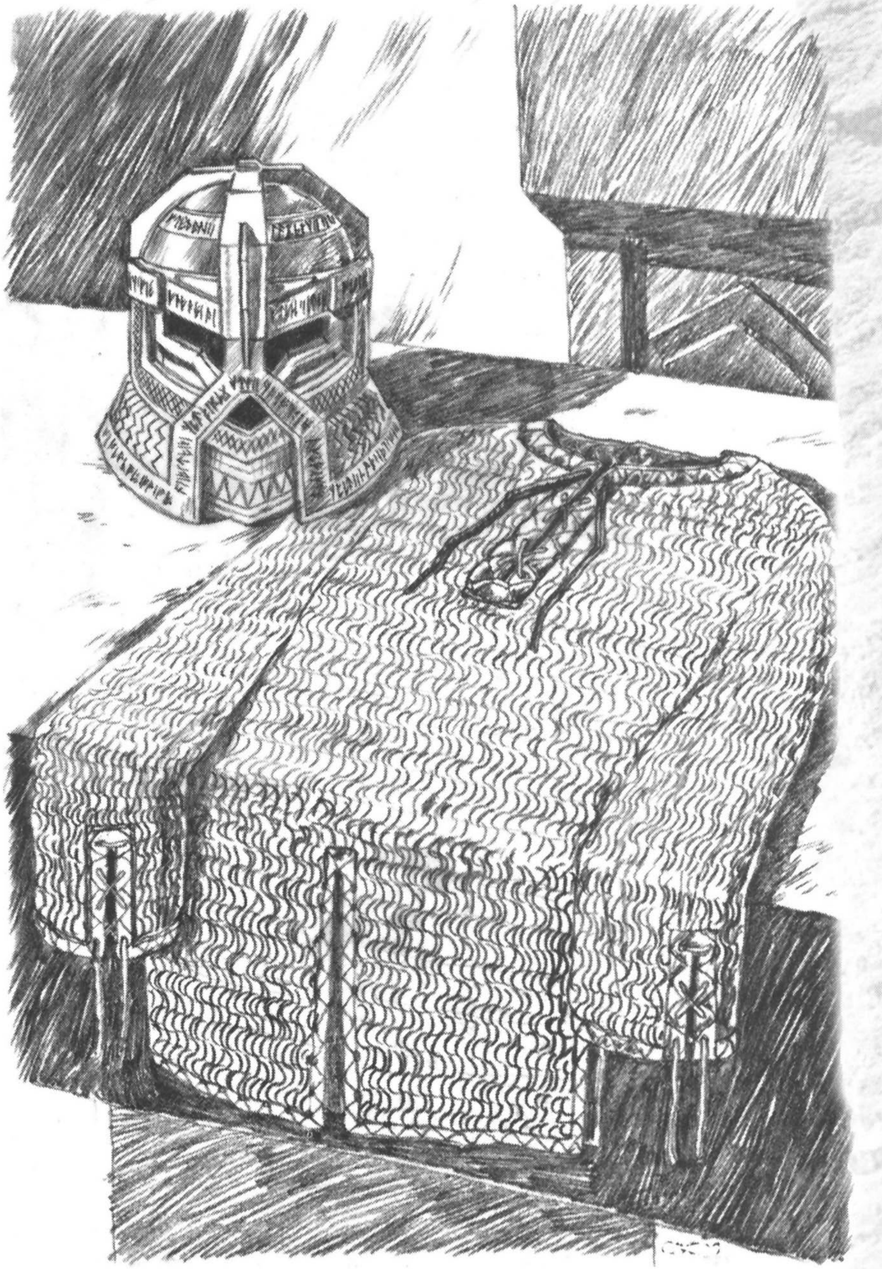
Durin's folk adopted the version of Daeron's runes used by the Noldor of Eregion, but they modified their form according to their tastes. This mode came to be known as the Angerthas Moria, which appears in Narvi's inscription on the West-gate of hazad-dûm. Further changes overcame the alphabet during the Dwarves' exile from Moria, and this new set was called the Angerthas Erebor. This was used on Balin's tomb as well as in portions of the Book of Mazarbul. All Dwarf-adventurers of the late Third Age use the Mode of Erebor.

ARMOUR OF BELEGOST

In two works, the armourers of Linnar's folk excel above all other peoples. The first were the Dragon-helms, visored masks capable of withstanding worms' breath. These are described on page 84 of *Fell Beasts and Wondrous Magic*.

The second armouring art for which Linnar's folk are known is the weaving of a fine metal mesh which can be used for chainmail. During the late Third Age, the centre of its making is Barukkhizdín in the Iron Hills. After the desolation of Smaug, the armourers of Dáin Ironfoot kept their works mostly to themselves, but since the restoration of Erebor and the rebuilding of Dale, they have become more open-handed, at least toward the Northmen and Thranduil's folk. The ever-increasing threat of the Easterlings has made this lightweight mail in great demand.

A full hauberk of this fine armour—which otherwise counts as Dwarf chainmail—does not cause the wearer to suffer the usual –1 penalty on Nimbleness tests.



BLASTING FIRE

The incendiary substances devised by Vigdís's folk with the aid of Saruman require a number of ingredients. These are, needless to say, a closely guarded secret of the Dwarves of Baraz-lagil. However, one critical component is well known (or at least widely-alleged): the red stone of the Mountains of the East, accessible only at Baraz-lagil itself. This effectively prevents anyone else from concocting the deadly substance without the Dwarves' leave.

Sauron failed to procure either the stone or the secret of its making during his occupation of neighbouring Nargubraz. Only Saruman enjoys the trust of the Khazâd and so receives periodic shipments of the rock in Isengard. Should the true nature of the White Wizard's designs or his ties with Mordor be discovered, the Sons of Vigdís would swiftly terminate their friendship with him.

Originally designed for the Dragon Wars, blasting fire—which the Dwarves call *baraznâd*—can also be deployed in siege warfare to deliver structural damage to a defender's fortifications. See *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* core rulebook, page 242, for this use.

DRAGON-FELL

The dragonslayers of Thulin's folk wear the hides of their slain adversaries as armour. When enchanted by the *riimut*, these hauberks render their wearers impervious to the fiery breath of Dragons. It also affords damage absorption equal to the value of the Armour special ability belonging to the Dragon from which it was made, typically 12-18. As a hauberk, the wearer of such a suit suffers –1 on

Nimbleness tests, but the typical +1 damage absorption is already figured in. A Dragon-fell wieghs 50 pounds.

The eager customer desiring to purchase a dragonslayer's fell meets with disappointment, if not outright hostility. It is a law among Thulin's folk that none may don a Dragon-fell who has not slain the worm it once belonged to. A Dwarf who dares defy this law is treated as an enemy by Thulin's folk and is hunted by the dragonslayers as though he were a worm himself. See the dragonslayer order ability 'Tool Dragon-fell' on page 24 for more information.

DRAGONSLAYER SPEAR

The harpoon-like spears wielded by the dragonslayers of Thulin's house are regarded as inalienable possessions of their owners—as inseparable to their existence as their own limbs. Woven with baneful enchantment, these spears ignore Dragons' Armour special ability when dealing damage and grant the attacker a +5 to Armed Combat and Ranged Combat tests made against Dragons. Being wrought of Dragon-bone, these spears cannot be broken by natural forces. Only a *Bladeshattering* spell or comparable power can harm them. See the dragonslayer order ability 'Carve Dragonslayer Spear' on page 24 for more information.

Miner Elite Order

Since they awoke, Dwarves of all lineages have been renowned throughout Middle-earth for their expertise at delving deep beneath the mountains. Indeed, throughout the Ages, these skills have contained both the seeds of Dwarven greatness as well as Dwarven downfall: 'Too deep we delved [at Moria],' spoke Glóin. Even though many of their mighty delvings are long abandoned, Dwarven miners still possess keen eyes and sharp tools for digging beneath the rock.

Adventures

While the majority of miners remain in one place for years at a stretch, exhausting a particular lode or crafting a single great delving, a minority are more interested in seeking out the ancient—and often abandoned—underground creations of their fathers. In such places many hope to learn ancient secrets of stonecraft, reclaim lost Dwarven treasures, or continue the efforts of legendary miners who came generations before. Dwarven miners are an asset to any band of heroes they join, not only for their inevitable Dwarven courage and doughtiness, but also because of their inexhaustible knowledge of all things underground.

Background

Most miners come to this order by way of the craftsman order, but as many Dwarves are also warriors, it is not uncommon for those to become miners as well. Although there are a smattering of miners among Men, it is rare to see such, and rarer still—thought not unheard of—to meet an Elf or Hobbit miner.

Requisites

To become a miner, a character must have Stonecraft (Mining) 8+ and Strength 8+.

Order Skills

The miner's order skills are: Appraise (Wit), Armed Combat (Nim), Climb (Str), Craft (Nim), Jump (Str), Observe (Per), Search (Per), Smithcraft (Str), Stonecraft (Str), Survival (Per), and Teamster (Str).

Abilities

The order abilities described below are available to miner characters.

Underground Sense: The miner with this ability knows unerringly—as long as he has not been transported while sleeping or unconscious—where he is in relation to known landmarks both underground and on the earth above him. If the miner does not know the lay of the local tunnels, such knowledge may not necessarily manifest in an intuitive knowledge of which way he must turn to get where he wants to go, but it often improves the chances (+3 or more test bonus) of an educated guess.

Hew Earth: Given even marginally adequate tools, miners are able to tunnel through stone as easily as farmers till the soil. A miner with this order ability can cleave through solid rock at a rate of 5 yards per hour, leaving behind a rough-hewn tunnel just large enough for a person of the same size as the miner to crawl through. A miner can tunnel only half that fast if making a tunnel tall enough to travel upright. Tunnels can be dug in any direction, including straight up or down. Miners with this ability often serve in the armies of Middle-earth alongside masters of siegecraft, as their ability to undermine enemy fortifications is unparalleled.

Hidden Minerals: Dwarves have legendary skill at locating veins of precious metals beneath the ground (though non-Dwarven miner characters can also learn this ability). With it, the miner can examine a few handfuls of stone and easily know whether any mineral he names—from mundane to marvelous—can be found within 100 yards of the sample's origin. With a successful TN 10 Stonecraft test, the miner also knows in precisely which direction he should dig to find it.

Mastery of Stone: Miners possess a deep understanding of the rock that underlies all of Middle-earth. Whenever a miner with this ability spends a point of courage on any Stonecraft test, or other Craft test somehow related to stone, that character gains a +5 bonus, rather than the usual +3.

Freedom in Dark Confines: Miners are accustomed to working in the types of cramped, poorly-lit spaces that constrain and discomfit others. Miners with this order ability ignore up to −5 in cumulative physical test penalties due to cramped underground quarters or underground darkness. This includes (but is not limited to) the penalties for dim lighting and darkness on page 218 of the core rulebook as well as the test penalties for cramped quarters described under 'Combat' on page 18 of *Khazad-dûm: The Delving of Durin's Folk.*

DWARF-STONES

This is the name the Easterlings give to the mystical gemstones cut by the earth-readers of Sindri's folk, who gift such talismans to their friends and make use of them for their own secret purposes. Typically, these are cut from precious or semi-precious stones found beneath the Spine of Arda—especially garnets and rubies—though the Easterlings sometimes convey rarer gemstones, such as sapphires, from distant sources beyond the great steppe-lands of Rhûn. For more information, see the earth-reader order ability 'Unlock Gem' on page 20.

A person who seizes a Dwarf-stone from its rightful owner is likely to fall under a curse, usually reversing the intended effect of the gem. See page 164 of *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* core rulebook for more information about such curses.

DWARF-TOYS

Dwarves have a reputation for grimness and gravity. On occasion, periods of wealth and prosperity have brought out a lighter, more pedestrian side to their nature. Such a time was the golden age of Erebor (TA 2590–2770), when Durin's folk enjoyed the reverence and friendship of the Men of Dale. Prolonged contact with Mannish society expanded the range of Dwarf-craftsmanship beyond swords and farm tools to include toys to delight and amaze the children of the Dale-men. In time, the fame of the toy-market of Dale spread far and wide throughout Rhovanion, reaching even as far as Gondor. The desolation of Erebor by Smaug abruptly interrupted the Dwarves' fancies, but as prosperity eventually resumed after the death of the Dragon, so too did the toy-making.

Most Dwarf-toys are miniature replicas of musical instruments, clocks, boats—anything with moving parts that requires great skill to devise. Many are also woven with minor enchantments that enable the toy to function just as its larger archetype, often on its own volition, or by the command of its owner. Being magical, Dwarf-toys rarely rust or run down, unless broken by force. Many trinkets wrought in Thrór's day were spirited away by the fleeing Dale-men and became treasured family heirlooms in Esgaroth. Those that survived the destruction of Lake-town are regarded as priceless antiques. Dwarf-toys fashioned in Erebor after the fall of Smaug are not prized nearly so highly—except by the children who are given them.

FELAKMÊK

The *felakmêk* are ancient pictographs that comprise the written language of Thulin's folk. Unlike the Cirth, however, the signs of *felak-*

mêk are believed to be magical in and of themselves. Thulin's folk refer to these symbols collectively by their outer name of *riimut*. To know the inner name of one of these signs is to wield its power. The Sons of Thulin willingly share the benefits of the *riimut* with their friends, the Lossoth, an act of open-handedness rarely seen among Dwarves of the other kindreds.

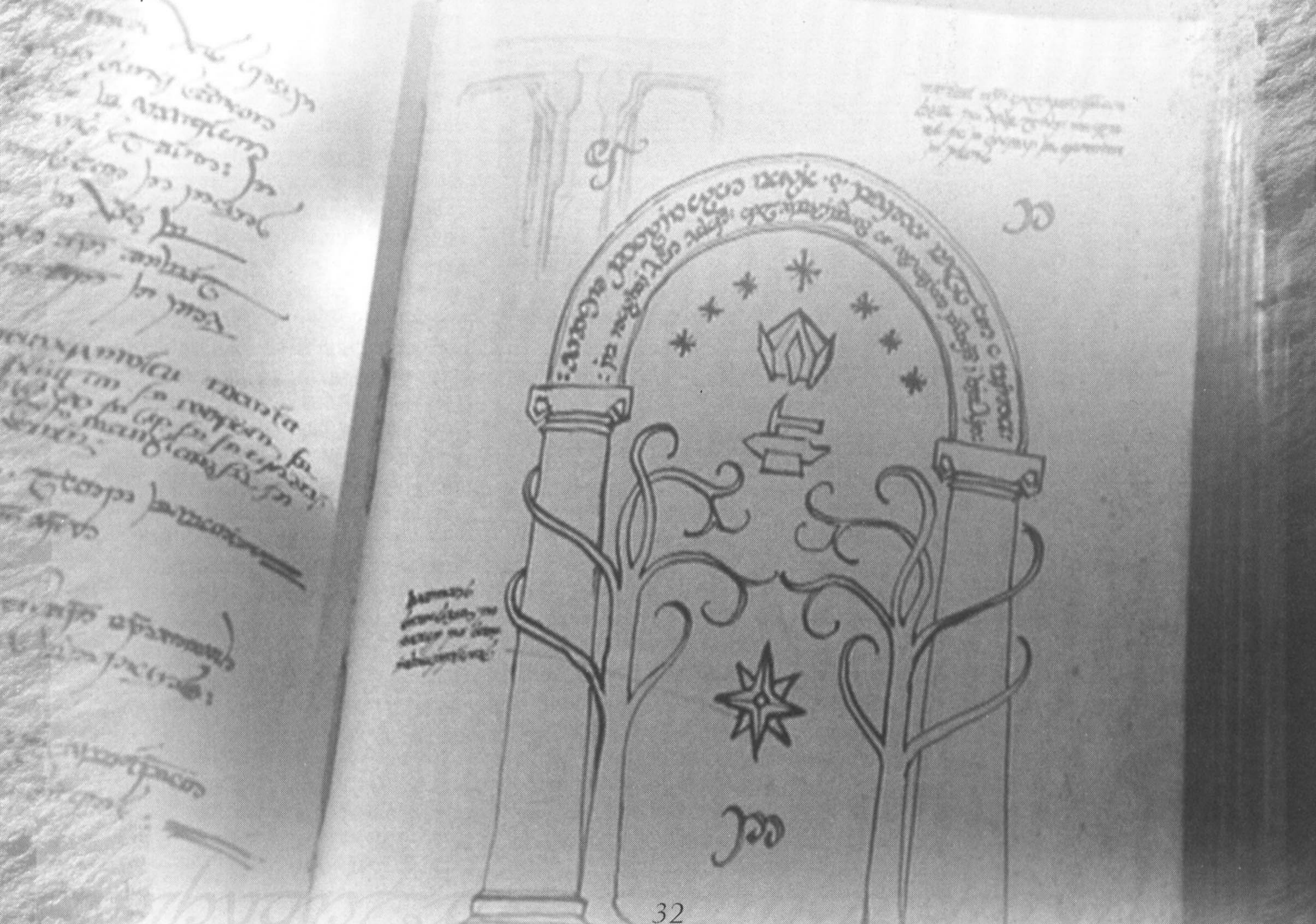
Since the age of the Dragon Wars, much of the lore of the *riimut* has been lost. By the late Third Age, the dragonslayers of Thulin's folk remember the inner names of only thirteen pictographs of what was originally a more extensive system. These thirteen fragments are concerned mainly with survival in the arctic wilderness and the deception and slaying of worms. The Lossoth may preserve others, but they, like the Sons of Thulin, are a scattered folk, so that knowledge tends to remain localised.

The secret name of one of the *riimut* can only be bestowed by one who is wise—either a dragonslayer or a Lossothren shaman. The act of transmitting this name is regarded by both cultures as a gesture of the highest confidence and deepest intimacy with the recipient, who is usually a firstborn son or an apprentice of many years standing. Acceptance of the inner name is equivalent to learning the spell with which that sign is associated.

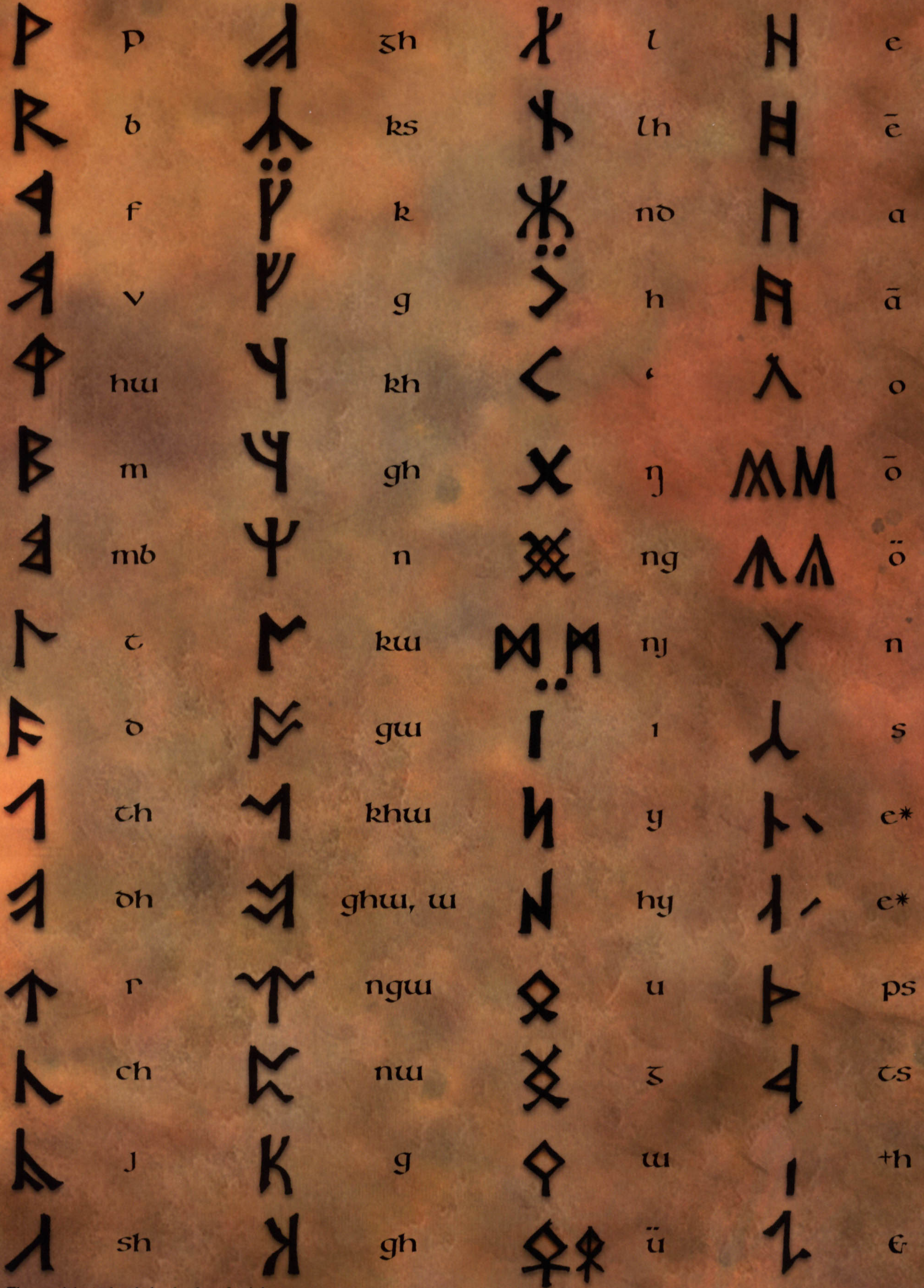
A spell-casting Dwarf who knows a *riimut* can use it to cast a spell much in the way that other Dwarves use runes. The difference is that the *riimut* does not increase the duration of the spell. Instead, it cuts the Weariness TN by –5.

ITHILDIN

Ithildin is a kind of enchanted ink used by the Dwarves to write 'moon-letters,' script that is invisible to the naked eye except when viewed under moonlight or starlight. The chief ingredient of *ithildin* is *mithril*, so naturally its use and availability have grown exceedingly rare since the exile of Durin's folk from Moria. In the days of their prosperity, the Longbeards often employed *ithildin* for the aesthetic enrichment of their works, especially their stonework, as with the inscription on the West-gate of Moria. During their exile, what little of it remained was put to more pragmatic uses, such as the encryption of Thrór's map of Erebor.



ANGERTHAS EREBOR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* These originated as halved values for 'e'.

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